

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 King, J.E. Manufacturing Company

other name/site number Long-King Furniture, Cloud Furniture Manufacturing, Springfield Seed Company

2. Location

street & town 1350 St. Louis Street N/A not for publication

city or town Springfield N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Greene code 077 zip code 65802

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.)

*Mark A. Miles*

*18 MAY 05*

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/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:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	1	Total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/Manufacturing Facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Factory  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof ASPHALT  
other WOOD  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

King, J.E. Manufacturing Company  
Name of Property

Greene County, MO  
County and State

**Description**

**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.)

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922-1955  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1936  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**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 Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Southwest MO State University; The Library Center  
\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Name of Property

Greene County, MO  
County and State

**10 Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1.63 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 4/7/3/4/6/0 4/1/1/7/1/2/5  
Zone Easting Northing  
3              
Zone Easting Northing

2              
Zone Easting Northing  
4              
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11 Form Prepared By**

name/title Robert Flanders, Ph.D.

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 6/15/2004

street & number 3628 S. Willowwater Ln. telephone 417-883-1486

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65809

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

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

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

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

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

**Property Owner**

name/title Jim Stout Realty, LLC

street & number 1350 St. Louis Street telephone 417-831-0204

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65802

**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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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

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### ***Description--Summary Paragraph***

The J. E. King Manufacturing Company is located on a 1.63 acre lot at 1350 St. Louis Street in Springfield, Missouri. It is two stories, built of red brick. Constructed in 1922 to house a wholesale furniture business and warehouse, the building was added to over time, including a great expansion in the mid-1930's to manufacture furniture. The L-shaped building is on a trapezoidal lot roughly bounded by St. Louis Street, Fremont Avenue, a small neighboring lot on the west side, and the St. Louis and San Francisco ("Frisco") Railroad right of way. The two-story elevation on St. Louis Street is a typical 1920's 1930's commercial block. This part of the building housed offices and display rooms and has a Moderne Style-influenced glass block storefront at first floor level. The upper story, added in the 1940's, is simply designed, with wide, evenly spaced fenestration. The rear, factory portion of the building is topped with banks of north-facing monitor windows, and is faced with plain brick walls. One contributing outbuilding contained electrical transformers. The lot also includes one small non-contributing brick outbuilding of undetermined use or date. Though modifications have been made to the interior and exterior, notably modifications to the rear loading area, the resource retains a high degree of integrity and conveys its significance as an industrial building of the second quarter of the twentieth century. The building also meets the registration requirements for the "Warehouse/Industrial: ca. 1838-1945" property type as described in the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, MO (Amended Submission)."

### ***Description Narrative***

The J. E. King Manufacturing Company building is a combination commercial and factory building. It underwent at least seven separate construction episodes during the Period of Significance, 1922-1954. The site is at 1350 St. Louis Street, Springfield Missouri. The most distinctive characteristic of the site is its trapezoidal shape, formed by the northwest-to-southeast angle of a bordering railroad track. St. Louis Street is now almost entirely commercial, though in 1922 the street was still largely residential at its distance of some four miles from the Public Square. A few dwellings remain, now mostly turned to commercial uses.

The building is L-shaped, and occupies the entire width of the 1.63-acre trapezoidal lot. The building is two stories, save for two one story elements: a small building abutting the east end, originally housing electrical transformers; and a large frame shed for railcar loading added to the west side. The foundation is concrete, the walls brick, and the roof asphalt. Different building episodes are marked on the exterior by differences in the brick. The narrower north leg of the "L" fronts tightly on the St. Louis Street sidewalk. The first floor walls of the St. Louis Street storefront are glass brick. Though now adapted to a new manufacturing enterprise, the original interior spaces remain largely intact. Present space utilization is roughly analogous to the original offices in the narrow front "L" leg, and production spaces in the very much larger rear "L" leg. The different building episodes, all involving masonry bearing walls, are clearly evident in the interior.

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**King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO**

Within the overall simplicity of an "L" shape, there is considerable complexity. Originally I-shaped, the building began to take on an L-shape when, on the rear of the east side, a forty-seven foot wide, 100 foot deep, two story wing was added. Then in 1936, in preparation for manufacturing operations, another enlargement was made, almost doubling the original square footage. Factory-like in design, the latter addition was brightly lit with banks of north-facing monitor windows. A one story brick addition to the St. Louis Street storefront provided spacious new offices, including an elegantly finished president's office. Its walnut paneling and fireplace contrasted with the unostentatious, utilitarian offices common in Springfield factories at the time.

The St. Louis Street storefront is 58' wide. It fronts a fifteen foot-deep addition to the original building. *It alone is symmetrical, though its two stories, built at different times, do not match.* The storefront, of glass brick, contains two sets of four vertical fixed window sets flanking a prominent entry. The second floor fenestration is in three bays of three sashes each. The two outer bays are directly above the paired sets of windows below them, while the third bay is centered above the entry. A prominent white signage banner between stories bears the words, "Engineered Packaging Co.," denoting the present occupant. A small plaque says, "Formerly J. E. King Manufacturing Co."

Moving to the east-facing elevation of the "L": The fifteen foot-deep St. Louis Street addition has no windows on the sides. Behind it, inside the "L," is the original north-south wall, presenting five equally spaced bays. Above are five sets of paired sash; below are three pairs of sash and two wide entry doors. At the turning of the "L," on a 50' east-west wall, are four bays: four pairs of sash above; three pairs and a door below. The windows match those of the north-south wall, but are much more closely spaced. The brick, cornice line and windows of the walls described above match, and appear to have been built at the same time. The brick of the front addition side walls is slightly different.

Continuing beyond the 50' portion of the east-west wall described above: The next seventy-five feet to the building's north-facing elevation is entirely different. The brick is different. The cornice line is lower. At the second story, three bays of very wide, closely-spaced windows occupy sixty feet of the space. Two openings below match two of the three above. Present modifications to these first-floor openings serve to widen them somewhat beyond the originals.

The east-facing Fremont Avenue elevation, 100 feet long, clearly reveals the function of this section of the building. Banks of north-facing monitor windows on the roof create five bays under a saw-tooth cornice line. The bays are filled with sets of factory-style, obscure glass windows with embedded wire. *Twenty small panes are in each set, the center six of which can be opened, casement-style.*

The rear of the building, the principal loading area, is irregular and possesses many wall planes and roof heights. Two prominent structures, one a tower, project backward from the principal building. At the southeast corner of the building, the point where the "L" turns back toward the north, the corner is turned by a chamfer. The chamfer was part of the original building, and has a large door which originally opened to a rail spur, now gone

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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

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Seven bays of windows are apparent at the second floor of the building's west side, including two in the chamfer. At the first floor are three large doors, including the one in the chamfer. A rail car loading shed, a frame addition to the original building, has a high, shed roof that slopes. There are two outbuildings, one contributing and one non-contributing. The contributing outbuilding is a one story, flat roofed addition built to house four electrical transformers. Its brick is the same color as that of the factory, is laid in the same common bond. Though it abuts the main building, the walls of the two buildings are discreet and structurally unattached. It is at the eastern-most corner of the factory's north-facing elevation, and abuts Fremont Avenue. The transformer building's south wall abuts the adjoining factory wall, but is structurally separate from it. The transformers have been removed, and the building is no longer in use. Just north of the transformer building and separate from it is a small, non-contributing, one story brick building. Its brick is different from any of the rest, and was probably built at a different time. Its purpose is undetermined.

Exterior features of the property include a parking lot inside the "L," an open field in the rear where the property terminates in a point, and an unimproved roadway between the building and the railroad right-of-way.

### **Integrity**

The building as it stands today is essentially the building of the 1954 end of the Period of Significance, save for minor exceptions. The St. Louis Street storefront windows are original save for a new vinyl strip above the first floor panes. New windows have been installed on the east-facing elevation inside the "L." Their new frames are vinyl; but the wall openings and frame design of the original windows have been retained. Custom moldings between frames and brick have been specially milled by the present owner to retain the original appearance. The windows of the west side elevation are original. Interior modifications have been made for adaptive reuse; but they do not change the overall original plan. The bearing partitions, essential elements of the various building episodes, remain. Even the interior transformers that stepped down power for the finishing machinery and the overhead trolleys that carried that power, remain. In the part of the building that is the turning of the "L" a broad concrete ramp, the principal means of moving materials between floors, remains unchanged. Additional restrooms have been installed, and the originals have been refitted. New H/AC, new plumbing, and a modern electrical system have been installed. The distinctive offices of the St. Louis Street storefront, including the "President's Office" fireplace, walnut paneling, and private restroom, have been retained. The original rail spur to the building has been removed.

Inclusion in MPD "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri (Amended Submission)"

The J. E. King Manufacturing Company may be included in the Multiple Property Document "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri," together with the Associated Historic Context "Early Industrial Development in Springfield, 1838-1945." The J. E. King

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO**

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Manufacturing Company building meets the NRHP Registration Requirements of Criterion A, Historical Significance, as follows: It was the site of a manufacturing business of particular importance to the community. It exemplified a particular building type and building use. The Period of Significance accords with the time of its industrial function. It is largely intact and is readily recognizable to its Period of Significance. It retains its basic original form, with no major alterations to principal exterior dimensions or roofline. Original materials predominate. Decorative glass blocks on the principal façade remain. Many original windows remain. Replacement windows are closely similar to originals.



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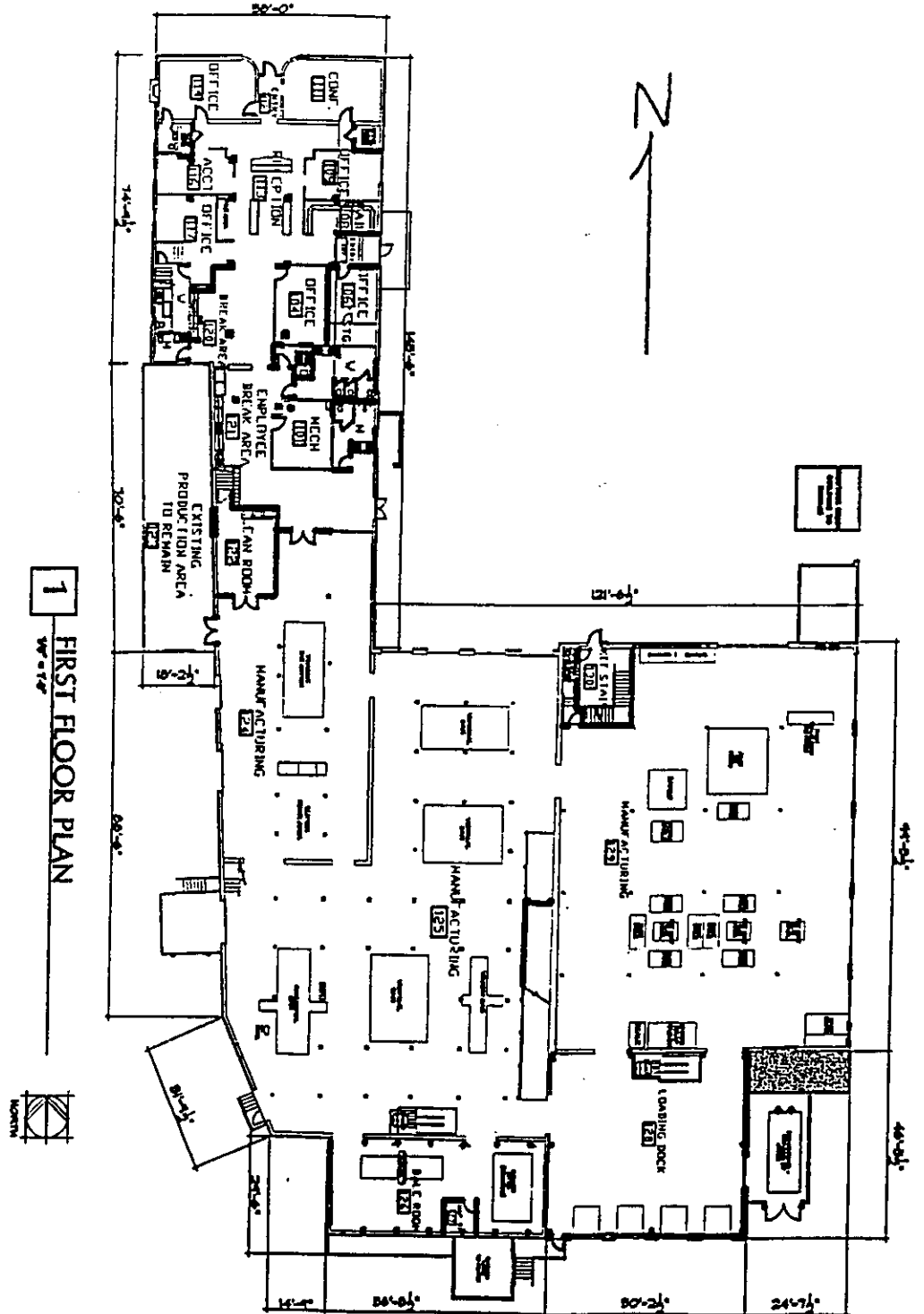
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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

#### Floorplan

ENGINEERED PACKAGING  
1350 E. ST. LOUIS SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI  
Source: Burns & Associates, Architects  
Springfield, Missouri



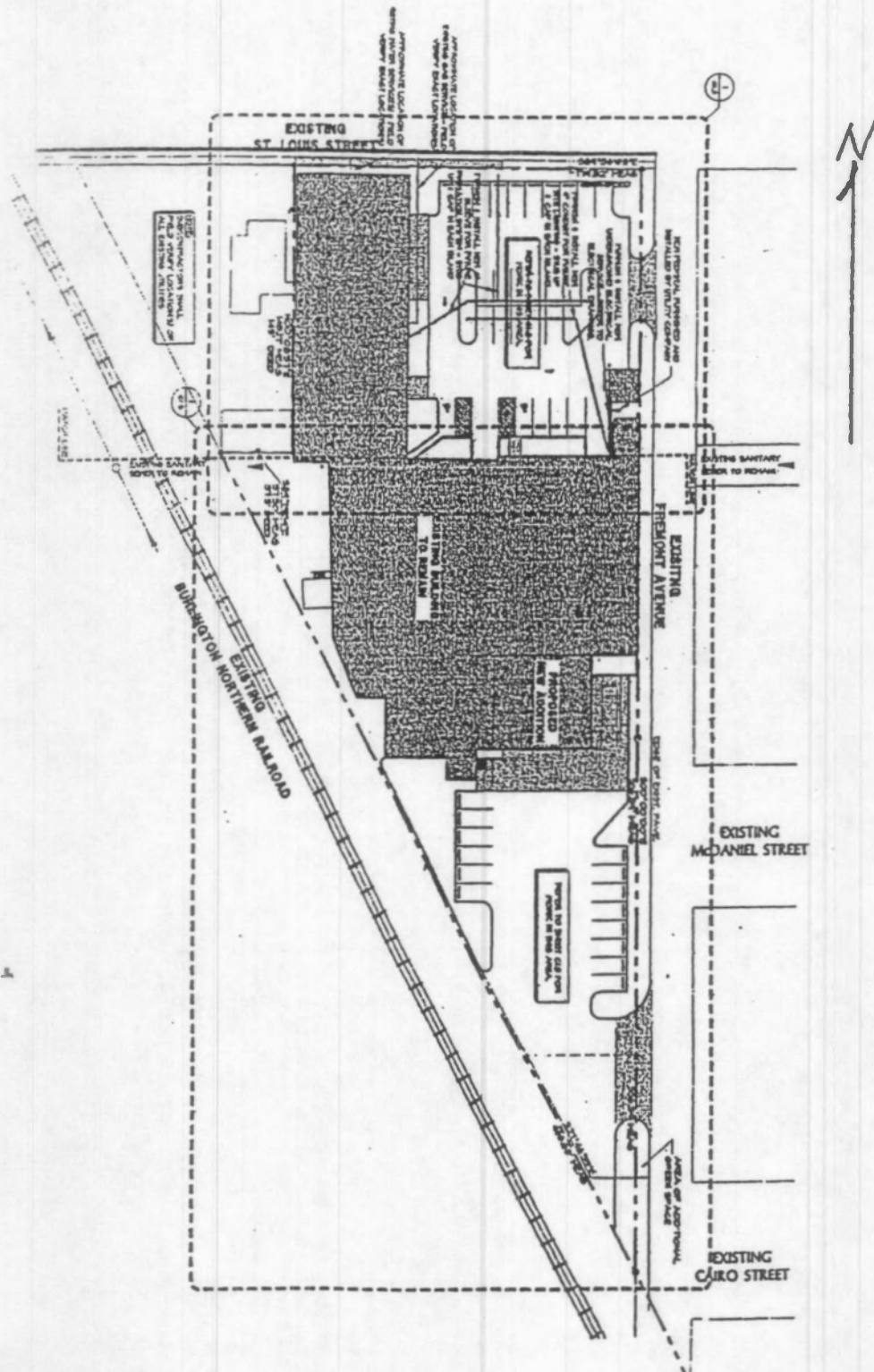
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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

## Site Plan



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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

## Tax and Aerial Map

Site Map



Aerial Photograph



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

### Summary Paragraph--Significance

The J. E. King Manufacturing Company, 1350 St. Louis St., Springfield, Greene County, is locally significant under Criterion A, in the area of INDUSTRY. Nominated under the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri (Amended Submission)," the property meets the registration requirements for the "Warehouse/Industrial" property type as a "site of a business of particular importance to the community." The J. E. King Manufacturing Company is a significant case study of wood products manufacturing in Springfield, Missouri, in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The J. E. King Furniture Manufacturing Company exemplifies Springfield's wood products manufacturing, which, in aggregate, was the leading industry in Springfield from 1890 to 1954. The King factory was a vertically integrated, (i. e. un-barked logs to finished product), labor-intensive, family-owned and family-managed furniture manufacturer of considerable size. Late in WW II it employed some 230 persons--including more than 80 women--making it the one of the largest industrial employers in Springfield. It was technologically advanced for its time in that it used only electric power taken off the city power grid. Constructed in 1922, the building was located where the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad ("The Frisco Line") crosses St. Louis Street, providing both rail and highway access.<sup>1</sup> The King building was the largest in a node of commercial-industrial structures located at that point. St. Louis Street had long been the major road east out of Springfield toward St. Louis City. In 1926, it was designated U. S. Route 66. The King Furniture Manufacturing building is the only structure remaining of that historic node. As the King Furniture Manufacturing Company developed out of the Long-King Company, wholesale and retail sales, so the Springfield economy and labor force expanded and diversified in the second quarter of the twentieth century after the long dominance of wholesaling, railroading, and small-scale, hand crafts manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> The period of significance is 1922 to 1955, the date of the construction of the original section of the building, through the arbitrary 50 year cut off date. The lot contains

<sup>1</sup> Interviews of Samuel O. King, grandson of James E. King, April 24 and June 1, 2004. King worked in the furniture plant as a high school youth, and remembers many details of company operations. He retains some King Company memorabilia, but no company records. See National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form: Tomlinson and Associates, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri, 1999," Section E, pp. 13, 14, and *passim*. This study alludes to twentieth century commercial buildings along US 66 beyond the fringe of the CBD, but does not mention manufacturing facilities. An expanded historical context is provided in the U. S. Census: The Eleventh through the Sixteenth Censuses of the United States 1890-1954, MANUFACTURES, *passim*. A ca. 1944 photograph of the massed King Employees is the source for their number. Photo courtesy Samuel O. King.

<sup>2</sup> Hoyer's, Dunham's, and Polk's *Director [ies] of Springfield, Missouri*, 1902, 1915, 1921-1922, 1925-1954. "J. E. King Dies at 77," *Springfield News-Leader*, 27 October, 1956. The one other large factory in the city, also a wood products manufacturer, was the Springfield Wagon Company. Its sales declined in the 1930's, and it closed in 1942. Steven Stepp, "History of the Springfield Wagon Company," M. A. Thesis, Southwest Missouri State University, 1972, *passim*. Providing an historical context is the U. S. Census, "Products of Industry in Springfield [Missouri], 1879-1880, MANUFACTURES." The list of eleven "manufacturers" includes a coffin maker, an undertaker, a blacksmith, and a gunsmith. A "furniture factory" had six employees. The Springfield Wagon Company was the largest employer, with sixty-five employees.

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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

two contributing and one non-contributing buildings.

### ***Narrative Statement of Significance***

#### *Historical Background*

The story of Springfield manufacturing from 1890 to 1954 is one of dramatic growth. The single industry that was predominant through the period was flour and grist milling. However, the wood products industry, defined as the aggregate of wagon manufacturing, lumber finishing, wood milling and planing, wood flooring, and furniture manufacturing, was the largest *type* of industry (this aggregation excludes "carpentry," a big industry in Springfield and a major category in the U. S. Census). The largest single manufacturing employer through at least 1930 was he Springfield Wagon Company. Begun in the 1870's, it was after 1900 reputed to be the largest manufacturer of farm wagons, military wagons, and circus wagons in the nation. The predominance of these two categories of industry—wood products manufacturing and flour and grist milling—reflects a tradition of Springfield as a regional center whose industry was built on the processing of two of the region's primary products—timber and cereal grains. Still, Springfield's biggest dollar businesses remained railroading, wholesaling, jobbing, and varied services to the region. A relationship between sales and manufacturing was that capital accumulated in the former provided the financial base for entrepreneurs to expand into the latter.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1900 and 1950 the population of Springfield nearly tripled. From 23, 267 to 66, 731. The pace of manufacturing growth was much greater. Between 1909 and 1919 alone the value of the products of manufacture increased almost fourfold, from \$5, 882,000 to \$18, 813,000. (In the Census of 1930, only the value of the products of industry for the whole of Greene County were published—\$28, 825, 000. The outlying county towns typically had grist and wood products mill themselves, thus adding greatly to the total.) From 1919 to 1939 the value of Springfield products of industry decreased slightly, from \$18,813,000 to \$18, 132,000, doubtless due to the Great Depression. The U. S. census of Manufactures in 1954 aggregated only the value added by manufacture, not the total value of manufactured products as before. In 1947 the VAM had been \$16,967,000. By 1954, only seven years later, the VAM had almost tripled to \$45,441,000.<sup>4</sup> Two furniture manufacturers are noted both in the censuses of 1899 and 1905. A Springfield Chamber of Commerce publication, ca. 1946, also noted two furniture manufacturers. No names are given. However, the city directories advertisements, entirely dependent as they were on paying advertisers, reveal no other firm names than that of J. E. King, which appear regularly. The inference is that the King firm was the most prominent of the two, or certainly the most aggressive advertiser, or both.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The U. S. Census, *op. cit. passim*. Stepp, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, "The Emergence of a Giant;" Sanborn Insurance map, 1925 (microfilm), The Library Center, Springfield.

<sup>4</sup> The U. S. Census, *op. cit., passim*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Dunham's City Directories, *op. cit., passim*. Springfield Chamber of Commerce, *Springfield: Capital of the Ozark Empire: The Growth of a City*. No Date, p. 43. (Reprint) Greene County Archives Bulletin Number Sixty. No date. Imputed date of the original is 1942, though it may have been 1946. Under the caption "Manufacturing and Other Plants," *Growth of a City* lists 200 firms by type of product produced. No firm names appear. Two "furniture" are listed, along with thirty-two other wood products concerns and

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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

### *The J.E. King Enterprise*

In 1922 James E. King and John P. Long entered into a partnership in Springfield to sell furniture at wholesale. Their firm was styled "The Long-King Furniture Company." They built a sales and warehouse building on St. Louis Street some four miles east of the Public Square, at the intersection of the Frisco rail tracks. A rail siding backed onto their building. A node of primary product and transport firms—oil, coal, ice, lumber, tires, trucks, autos—had developed at that point to take advantage of the combination rail and highway access. St. Louis Street, still predominantly residential at that location, had become a trucking artery east out of Springfield. In 1926 it would be designated "US Route 66."<sup>6</sup>

In 1926 or 1927, the eldest son of James King, Samuel E. King, was (in the words of Samuel E's son Samuel O.) "forced by his father" to take out a \$10,000 bank loan to buy stock in the firm. Sam was only twenty-one and recently married. The infusion of new capital was probably used to meet debt obligations, or to expand the business, or both.<sup>7</sup>

By the close of the 1920's Long's management role in the firm had diminished, and King's had increased. As sales slowed in the mid 1930's, young Sam King influenced his father to turn the business exclusively to manufacture. The son, thirty one in 1936 and a college graduate, "used a slide rule to work out the numbers," convincing his father that such a move could be profitable. Though the elder King had no background in manufacturing, and was an entirely self-taught salesman from rural Webster County, Missouri, the firm readied itself for a complete about-face.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Facility*

The building is the result of many separate construction episodes. The original 1922 building was of two stories, I-shaped, and oriented perpendicular to St. Louis Street. The front part was show space behind spacious plate glass windows. The building was 59' wide east-to-west, and some 210' deep, north-to-south.

The original I-shaped building began to take on an L-shape when, on the rear of the east side, a forty-seven foot wide, 100 foot deep, two-story wing had been added. Then in 1936, in preparation for manufacturing operations, another enlargement, 75' x 100' was added, almost doubling the original square footage. Factory-like in design, the latter addition was brightly lit

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eighteen flour and grist mills.

<sup>6</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map, *op. cit.* The 1925 map shows that by that date only the front leg, or "I" portion of the final "L, had been built. Samuel O. King interviews. A "J. L. Long and Sons," furniture sales, was in existence as early as 1915. The middle initial in Long's name, habitually repeated in city directories, is in error. The middle initial was "P."

<sup>7</sup> Samuel O. King interviews. Samuel O. King is the eldest son of Samuel E. King.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
Greene County, MO

with banks of north-facing monitor windows.

Behind the main building, presumably also in 1936, a saw mill, kiln, seasoning shed, and planing mill were erected. (The mill building was destroyed by fire sometime subsequent to the Period of Significance.) On the west side of the building were the railroad tracks. A rail spur served a frame, shed-like addition, that could shelter an entire car.

A one-story brick addition to the St. Louis Street front provided a baronial touch--a spacious and elegant office for the president--façade walls of modish glass brick, a walnut-paneled fireplace, and a private half-bath. In the mid- or late 1940's a second story was built above the offices, completing the structure as it stands today.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Management*

The Long-King Company was a prototypical example of a family-owned and family-managed business, common in Springfield in the first half of the twentieth century. Though it was a privately-held joint stock corporation, in practice it followed a tradition of a rather patriarchal, proprietary/partnership management, with many sons brought into the business. (The senior son, Samuel E., was the only King other than his father to own stock in the firm.)<sup>10</sup>

Two families were involved--the Longs and the Kings. J. P. Long had already been in furniture sales for several years when James King joined him in 1922. *Dunham's City Directory* for 1925 reflected Long's seniority, listing him as "pres" and King as "sec & genl mgr." By 1929 the power relationships had changed. *Directory* listings then were "J E King Pres-Genl Mgr" and "J L Long [sic] Sec-Treas." One F. W. Lane, the firm's chief accountant, was vice president.<sup>11</sup>

Though the name "Long-King Furniture Company" was used in city directories through the 1930's, J.P. Long was no longer an officer, and his role in daily operations diminished. He owned a retail furniture store in downtown Springfield; and to this he and some of his sons turned their attention. As Long's involvement receded, King brought his own adult children into the business. The manufacturing operation, when undertaken, was run primarily by the King family. (One E. M. Long, a son of J.P. Long, remained an officer in the firm through at least 1937.)<sup>12</sup>

Under King's vigorous direction the furniture manufacturing business not only survived the

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* A ca. 1944 photo, courtesy Samuel O. King, shows the one story addition.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel O. King interviews.

<sup>11</sup> *Dunham's City Directory*: for 1925, p. 290; for 1927, p.244; for 1929, p. 211. Fred Lane was the only "outsider" to own company stock--and that, a mere 5%. Samuel O. King interviews.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel O. King interviews. *Polk's City Directory of Springfield*, for 1931, p. 176; for 1935, p. 190; for 1937, p. 180. *City Directory Buyers' Guide*, 1937, p. 12.



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**King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
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Depression; it flourished. In 1942 he bought out the entirety of the Long interest. Ever the salesman, King widened his markets to include much of the American Southwest. The Kings adopted the Frisco railroad's popular Southwestern design devices--cowboys, Mexicans, Indians, horses, cattle ranch themes—and, using leather-like, beige colored fabrics and light wood finishes, they fashioned a successful line of "ranch" furniture. King even acquired retail space in Western Auto stores. When WW II came, the King factory secured government war contracts to furnish much of Camp Crowder, Fort Leonard Wood, and other new military installations. "War work" enabled the firm to acquire scarce fabrics and other manufacturing necessities, providing a competitive edge.<sup>13</sup>

Following the war, seven other company officers, in addition to President J.E. King, bore the King surname. As the 1940's gave way to the 1950's, King Sr. spent less time on day-to-day operations, leaving the management to his sons. He withdrew to the life of philanthropist and gentleman farmer. He died in 1957, aged 77 years.<sup>14</sup>

### *Operations and Labor*

The King Manufacturing Company was a vertically integrated manufacturing operation, i. e. the entirety of manufacture from raw logs to finished furniture was accomplished on premises. The manufacturing process began with off-loading un-barked oak logs from company trucks hauled from company-owned timber stands in Arkansas. They were barked, sawn to suitable dimensions in the saw mill behind the plant, and placed in the kiln for drying and seasoning. Seasoned lumber was sawn and rough-planed for the various lines of furniture. The pieces then went inside the main plant for finishing and assembly. Finish sanding, polishing, and varnishing of all wood pieces were done with hand-operated, electric motor-driven machines, typically by men. Upholstering was essentially a needlework-like operation, skills already possessed by many women. Fabric was cut and fitted, filled with cotton batting, and sewn or tacked.

The King furniture lines included dinette sets, occasional tables, bedroom suites, mattresses, and upholstered living room furniture—the latter featuring much exposed wood. Oak was the only wood employed. No chrome or synthetic surfaces were employed. They were marketed under the trade name "Sovereign King." The lines were low- to moderate-priced, well-made, and aimed at a popular market. The "ranch" lines were especially successful. Selling them through Western Auto stores was a marketing coup.<sup>15</sup>

The electric power system of the King plant was typical of efficient light industry factories in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Four transformers in the power house converted city-supplied AC to 480-volt DC, which flowed in copper bus bars throughout the plant. Big electric motors powered the saw mill, the planing mill, and the lathes. A series of small transformers,

<sup>13</sup> Samuel O. King interviews. Polk's *City Directory of Springfield*, 1947, p. 279

<sup>14</sup> Samuel O. King interviews; *Springfield News-Leader*, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



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wall-mounted at regular intervals, reduced the current for the smaller machines to 240 volts.<sup>16</sup>

To undertake such an operation in the teeth of the Great Depression, today seems amazing—especially inasmuch as it succeeded. One advantage was the availability of unemployed expert workers forced out of the Springfield Wagon Company. The market for farm wagons had virtually disappeared by 1936, causing severe cutbacks in wagon production. Though specific data are lacking, one may infer that layoffs at Springfield Wagon must have occurred. Springfield Wagons were famous for the durability and refined workmanship of their oak-made hubs, spokes, and wheels. Oak is a difficult wood to work, and Springfield Wagon workers' handling of oak was superb. Thus a labor force to fashion J. E. King's all-oak furniture was at hand. Layoffs of similarly-skilled workers probably occurred at Springfield woodwork, sash, and door factories as well, dependent as they were on the by-then dried-up new housing market.

The number of employees pictured in the ca.1944 photo totaled 230, including 84 women. It probably represents the work force near its wartime maximum—one of the largest of any manufacturer in Springfield at the time. (Especially was this the case after the dissolution of the Springfield Wagon Company in 1942.)<sup>17</sup>

The level of wages or benefits that might have been paid King's employees is undetermined. Almost any steady work in the 1930's was considered a godsend. Two known aspects of King Furniture remuneration are significant. The first was piecework pay. Upholsterers pinned little slips of paper to a piece they had worked on, with their name and what they had done written on it. Men in the saw mill got paid "by the stick." And so on throughout the operation. Ozarkers traditionally preferred piecework pay—as did management. It favored fast, diligent work. It seemed fairer and less open to abuse.

Second: the shop was never unionized. An open shop suited the Ozarkers' independence and individuality. But union organizers from Kansas City were chronically on hand, attempting to end the open shop. Intimidation was rife, even extending to the front door of the King homes. The Kings requested police protection, and got it. Company trucks were followed on the highways, their drivers harassed and frightened. The situation got so bad that trucking was abandoned in favor of rail transport alone. King sought to gain worker loyalty through personal

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<sup>16</sup> Personal inspection by the author; conversation with the chief electrician of the present remodeling crew, May 28, 2004. Remnants of the old electrical system remain.

<sup>17</sup> Stepp, *op. cit.*, Chapter VI, "The End of an Age." Samuel O. King interviews. Samuel O. King photo.

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**King, J.E., Manufacturing Company  
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relationships. He knew his employees by name, and went through the plant regularly greeting them. He showed concern for their families, and for any particular problems they might have. He even took the unusual step of granting all his regular employees an annual week of paid vacation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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Greene County, MO

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#### Unpublished Manuscript

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#### Old Photograph

Ca. 1944 photo of the assembled employees of the J. E. King Manufacturing Company. Property of Samuel O. King.

#### Map

Sanborn Insurance Map, 1925. The Library Center, Springfield, Missouri (microfilm).

#### NRHP Document

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King, J.E. Manufacturing Company  
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### Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

#### Legal Description

All of that tract of land described in book 2087 at page 182 in the Recorder's Office in Springfield, Greene County, Missouri, being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the Southwest Corner of St. Louis Street and Fremont Avenue; thence S00deg., 00'00 "E along the West right-of-way line of Fremont Avenue, a distance of 556.39 feet, to a point on the right-of-way line of the Burlington Northern Railroad; thence N27deg46'35"W along said Easterly right-of-way a distance of 446.35 feet to an existing iron pin; thence S89deg19'54"E, a distance of 37.30 feet to an existing iron pin; thence N00deg08'37"E, a distance of 145.17 feet to an existing iron pin; thence, S89deg36'02"E, a distance of 179.83 feet to the point of beginning containing 1.63 acres (70,833 square feet)."

### Boundary Justification

The boundary described above is the legal boundary of the property, and encompasses the entirety of the resource.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

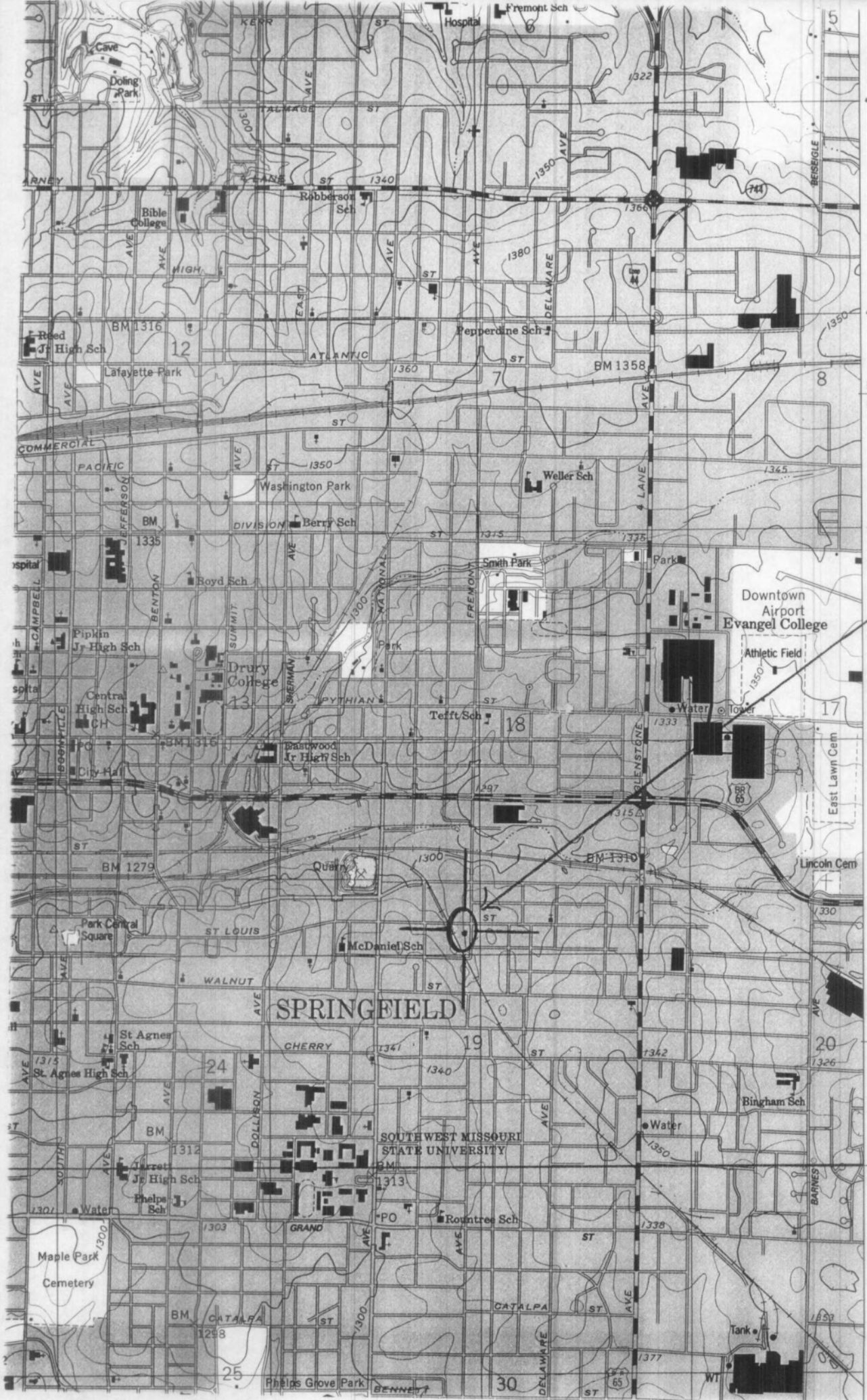
The following is true of all photographs:

J.E. King Manufacturing Company  
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri  
Photographer: Robert Flanders, Ph. D.  
Date: April 20, 2004

Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102

- 1 View SW. General view. Five different building episodes are evident in this photo.
- 2 View SW. East front section, showing three building episodes. Original building left of drainpipe.
- 3 View S. St. Louis Street elevation. Note glass block at first floor level. This elevation was covered, and masked from view, from the 1960's to 2004.
- 4 View SW. View of "factory" element of the second "L" addition. Note north-facing monitor windows. Foreground building is non-contributing. Behind utility pole is contributing transformer building. Fremont Avenue, foreground.
- 5 View SSW. Original "I" portion of building, right. The two "L" additions, center left.
- 6 View W. Fremont Avenue elevation of "factory." Transformer building, far right.
- 7 View NW. General view, rear of building.
- 8 View NE. Southwest corner, rear of building. Chamfered corner accommodated outside rail spur loading. Covered rail spur shed, barely visible at far left.





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"21  
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"16

J.E. King Manufacturing Co.

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FEET

SPRINGFIELD

SOUTHWEST MISSOURI  
STATE UNIVERSITY

Downtown  
Airport  
Evangel College



















