

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form****1. Name of Property**historic name Meier General Storeother names/site number Butler Bros. Grocer Co.**2. Location**street & number 3669 Mill Street [N/A] not for
publicationcity or town New Melle [N/A] vicinitystate Missouri code MO county St. Charles code 183 zip code 63365**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 23 May 07
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

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

Number of Resources Within Property

Contributing

Non-contributing

1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

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

Other: Gable-front store

Materials

foundation Stone

walls Weatherboard

roof Metal

other

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [x].

See continuation sheet []

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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

ca. 1857-ca. 1900

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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:

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	684360	4286740			
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 Independent Contractor date December, 2001
 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 Steve and Sally Butler
 street & number PO Box 237 telephone 636-398-4250
 city or town New Melle state MO zip code 63365

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Meier General Store
St. Charles County, Missouri

Summary: The Meier General Store, in New Melle, St. Charles County, Missouri is a one story frame gable-front store which sits on a stone foundation. It was built ca. 1857, and housed a general store into the mid-1900s. The building occupies a corner lot at the intersection of Mill and Gronenberger Streets, near the north edge of New Melle, MO. It is the only resource on the property. The front-facing gable roof has early or original wood shake shingles beneath corrugated tin roofing, and prominent boxed cornice returns accent the front and back eave lines. The building has a symmetrical facade, with a wide central doorway which is flanked by tall window openings; two smaller window openings are located in the upper gable end. The doorway contains a pair of 19th century front doors, and the window openings and frames are intact, although the sash are missing. The facade also bears marks of an open porch which once spanned the entire front wall; the porch will be replicated during an upcoming rehabilitation. The exterior walls of the store are sheathed with narrow wood weatherboards which are original or very early; they are attached to the underlying studs with square nails. The interior of the store, which contains one large open room on the ground floor, is highly intact; it has wide wood flooring, and the walls and ceiling are sheathed with simple flat boards of varying widths. The original door and window openings have very simple Greek Revival style interior trim, with shallow pedimented lintel pieces and simple beaded flat side boards. All of the interior woodwork is original or very early, and no interior elements have seen any changes of note in over a century. The period of significance for the building runs from ca. 1857, when it was constructed, to ca. 1900, when owner Charles Meier began expanding the building. Those 20th century additions, which suffered from a fire in the 1980s, are now missing, leaving the store with the form it had for almost half of the 19th century. With the exception of the missing porch, the original part of the building is highly intact, and appears today very much as it did in the 1860s.

Elaboration: The Meier store is located along the northern edge of the original town of New Melle; the original town boundary runs along Groenberger Street, which borders the store property on the south. Although the corporate boundaries of the community have grown in recent years, the developed core of New Melle today is roughly the same size it was in the mid-1800s, and, with the exception of State Route D, which is a 20th century route, the streets shown on the original plat are still the main streets in town today. Mill Street, which is the primary north-south road through the center of the community, has been in place since the plat was filed in 1850.¹

The building sits very close to Mill Street, which it faces, and is about 30 feet north of

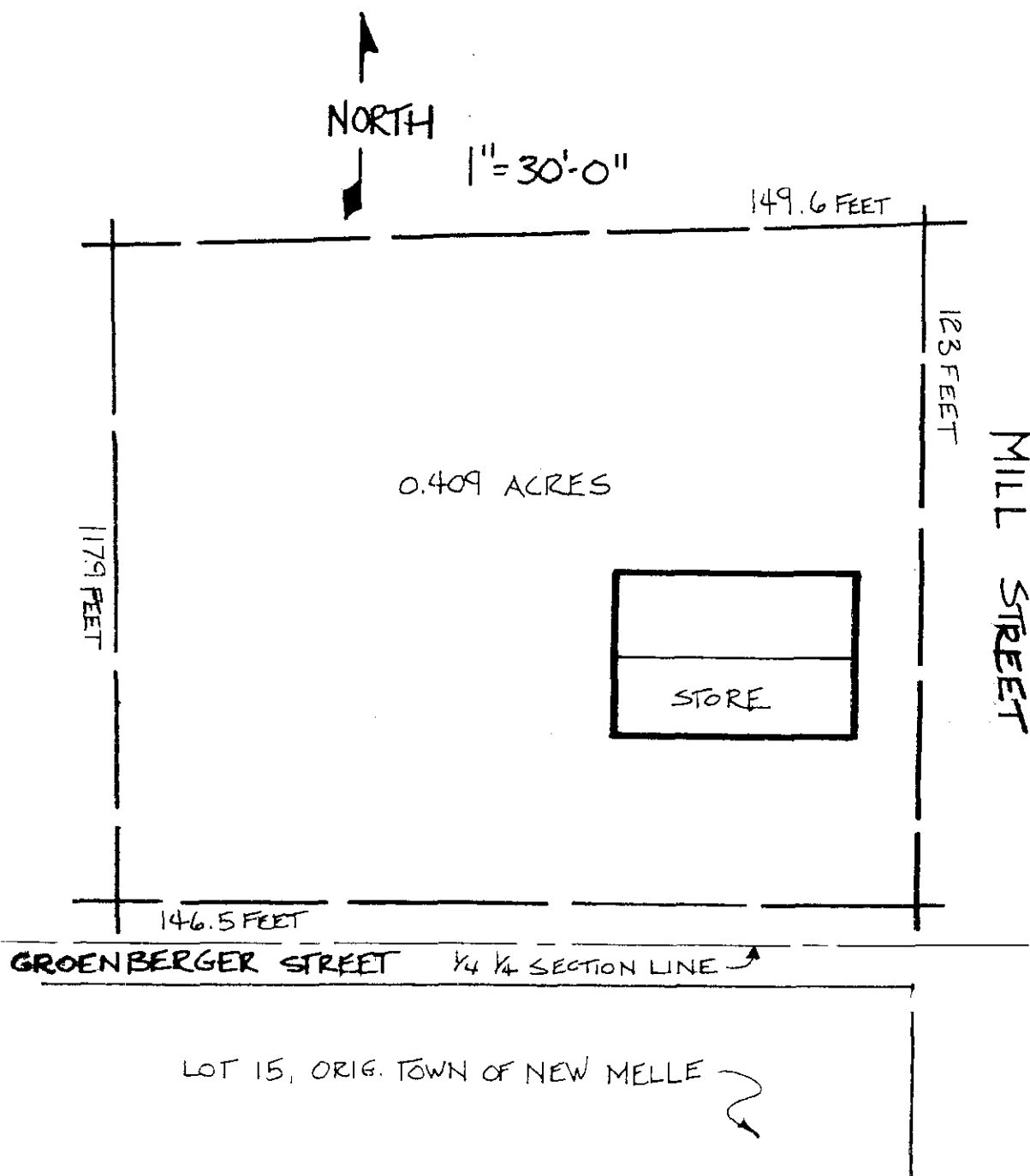
¹ Bill Schiermeier, "Brief Review of New Melle History," in Cracker Barrel Country, Vol. IV, (Washington, MO: Washington Missourian, 1995.) St. Charles County merchant records, which go back to 1851, show that there were at least three mills in operation in Callaway Township by that time, and it has been assumed that one was in operation in New Melle when the street was named.

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Figure One. Site plan.



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Gronenberger St., which is a narrow side street. The lot slopes gently towards the rear of the building, and more foundation is exposed at the back of the building than at the front. The foundation consists of buff colored limestone, set in a coursed rubble pattern. There are two foundation windows in each side wall and two in the back; the basement windows on the north wall are shorter than the other four. Most of the basement windows still have early or original multi-light sash, and the openings are covered with exterior metal bars which are also early. There is a large, irregular, modern opening in the back part of the north foundation, which provides walk-out egress from the basement. (That opening will be filled in during the rehab.)

Historic photos and marks on the building show that the facade, which faces east to Mill Street, at one time had a full-width front porch which had a shed roof and simple square columns. The upper wall of the facade has no weatherboards where the porch roof connected to the building. The photos and the marks on the building will be used to model a replicated porch during the upcoming rehabilitation. The gable end of the facade still has most of its original narrow weatherboards, as well as two small square window openings above the line of the porch. Although those window sash are missing, the openings and frames are original, and unchanged, and the window sash will be replaced during the rehab.

The lower part of the facade features a wide central doorway which holds a pair of entrance doors which appear to date to the 1870s or 1880s. The wooden doors, which are highly intact, have large, two-light sash over smaller inset wooden panels. The doorway is flanked by tall narrow window openings. The window openings and frames are intact, although the sash are missing. Part of a cornice return and a small amount of weatherboarding on the front wall are currently missing; the windows, weatherboards, and cornice return will all be replaced in-kind during the upcoming rehabilitation.

Although the building now standing is the original store, there was at one time a large addition to its north side. That section, which was begun in the very late 1800s or early 1900s, burned in the 1980s, and was removed early in 2001. (The building had been vacant since the fire and the addition was too deteriorated to salvage.) The addition had a side-facing gable roof which connected to the main roof near the front wall, and at one time had an open front porch which matched the porch on the original store. A small part of the connecting roof structure remains in place on the current roof. It was built over the original shakes, but under the tin sheathing, leading to the assumption that the tin roof was installed around 1900 as well.

The front part of the north wall still shows the outline of that early addition; the weatherboards which were covered by the connecting room are painted white, while the other exterior walls of the store retain only remnants of light grey paint. There is also a doorway centered in that wall which appears to be early, but not original. The doorway is surrounded on the exterior by horizontal beadboard, and may have had a sliding door at one time. Neither door nor trim survive today. A second opening closer to the front of the building, which also has no door or trim appears to be newer. (The central doorway will be retained, the one closer to the front will be filled in, and covered with materials which match the originals.)

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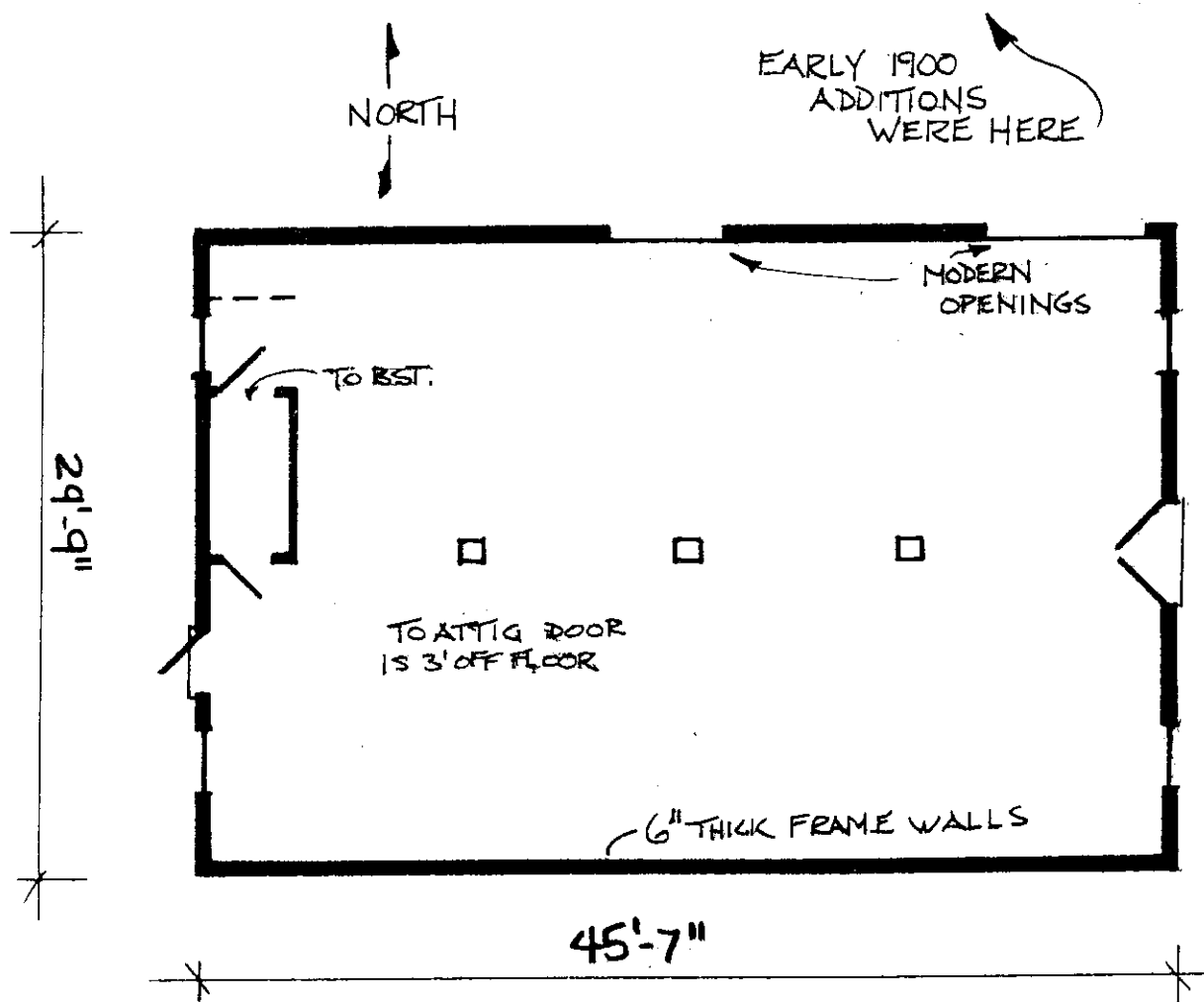
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The other walls of the building have seen few alterations. The south wall, which has no window or other openings, has seen no changes of note, and the weatherboards are mostly intact.

Figure Two. Ground Floor Plan.

Drawn by Deb Sheals, after rehab drawings prepared by Timberland Design, St. Louis, MO.



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The back wall, which has a door and two windows at the ground floor, also retains most of its original weatherboards. The door there, which is early, has diagonal board sheathing on the exterior, and vertical boards on the inside surface. One ground floor window has portions of its early or original 6/6 sash; all of the muntins and glass are missing and the sash itself is in pieces. The other opening has been slightly altered for a modern sash, only portions of which remain in place. Both of those window openings will be restored to their original size, and will receive new, custom-made, 6/6 windows which match the original sash exactly.

The gable end of the back wall contains two square window frames which are like those on the facade. One of those still has an early or original sash. That sash, which slides up into a pocket in the wall, has six lights. Replacement sash for all of the upper windows will be modeled after that surviving window. The interior of the building is notably intact. The ground floor contains a single open store space, with a small enclosed stairway on the back wall, and a row of heavy square posts running down the center of the room. The stairway walls are sheathed with flat vertical boards, and there are two simple board and batten doors; one to the basement and one to the second floor. The doorway to the attic steps is roughly three feet off the ground; presumably, additional steps were once located below it. The posts, which support a large square beam, are each 9-1/2 inches square. The beam and the posts are all cased with finished boards. The ceiling is covered with simple flat boards which run parallel to the beam. The wood floor, which is early or original, is highly intact and in good condition; the floorboards are also set parallel to the central beam. The interior walls are all sheathed with unadorned flat boards which are placed horizontally on the wall. The wall and ceiling boards are of random widths, varying from around three, to just over four inches in width. There is no evidence of plaster or any other finish material; the boards appear to be the only sheathing ever used on the walls.

The interior door and window openings on the front and back walls all have simple Greek Revival style woodwork which includes shallow pedimented lintel pieces which slightly overhang the side trim. Each pediment is ornamented with a straight line of simple molding, set near the top edge. The side trim boards are flat, with a single bead along the outside edge; the beading appears to have been done with a hand plane. Some of the trim has recently been removed for repairs, and two windows were missing some trim; surviving originals and paint marks left on the walls will be used to model replacements for the missing elements. The two newer doorways on the north wall have no surrounding trim at all.

The basement is a plain unfinished room with a concrete floor and stone walls. The walls have remnants of plaster, the only element of finish found in the room. A row of sawn wood posts runs beneath those on the first floor; they measure 9 inches wide by 7 inches deep. The posts support a large beam which is rough sawn on three sides, but retains its bark along the bottom surface. The beam is 7-1/2 inches wide and roughly 10 inches deep.

The large floor joists for the main floor are visible in the basement. They measure 9-1/2 inches by 2 inches, and are notched where they overlap the center beam. The sill plates are also visible in the

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plates are massive, measuring 7" square. (County tax records show that steam- and ox-powered saw mills were in operation in the township as early as 1851.) Although most of the framing for the building is put together with square nails, some mortise and tenon construction was also used. The front sill has at least one large mortise at the center line, which presumably was used to support the early porch framing.

The large attic contains one large room. The side walls of the building continue up past the attic floor about three feet. Those walls have the same type of horizontal board sheathing used for the first floor walls, and the wood flooring, which is original or very early, is also similar to that on the ground floor. No other finish materials are left in that area, although the roof joists and some apparently later stud walls there appear to have once held lath for plaster.

Overall, the Meier Store looks today much as it did around the turn of the century, just before the north addition was begun. The exterior walls, though in need of attention, retain a good deal of original material, and the basic form and patterns of fenestration are today much as they were in the 1800s. The vast majority of the early weatherboards have survived intact, as have the early front doors, and the original window openings. The interior is especially intact; it has seen no major alterations in the last century. The building today looks much as it did during the period of significance, and, once the rehabilitation is complete, will again function in its original commercial capacity. △

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Summary: The Meier General Store in New Melle, MO is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. It is the only 19th century general store building in New Melle today, and one of the oldest commercial buildings of any type to be found there. The building housed a general store and related commercial functions from the time of its construction, around 1857, into the last half of the 20th century. The store was established by a prominent local pioneer very early in the history of the community, and played an important role in area commerce throughout New Melle's most important historical period of development. It was a local, family operated, business throughout that time period, run by three generations of the Meier family. The land the store occupies was patented by German immigrant William Meier, who established the store business around 1857. It passed to his son, Ernst H. Meier, in the mid-1860s. Ernst Meier ran the store until his death in the late 1870s, after which his widow, Catherine L. Meier, took over; she operated the business for approximately twenty years. Their son, Charles F. E. Meier, began running the store around 1899, and remained at that location into the 1940s. The period of significance for the building runs from ca. 1857, when it was constructed, to ca. 1900, when Charles Meier began expanding the building. Those additions are now gone, leaving the store with the form it had for almost half of the 19th century. The interior is highly intact, and with the exception of a missing front porch, the exterior also appears today very much as it did during New Melle's greatest period of commercial development to date. The building strongly reflects its original function, and is an important survivor from New Melle's earliest days.

Elaboration: New Melle is a small town, located in rural St. Charles County. The town was named after Melle, Germany, the home of many of the German immigrants who began arriving in the area in the late 1830s.² The town was first laid out by German immigrant Franz Kamper, on 20 acres of land donated by the newly organized St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Kamper's original plat of 1848 included 16 lots of an acre each, plus a 2-acre "Market Square" near the center of town.³ (Kamper's plat was officially filed with the St. Charles County Recorder by Virginia-born Samuel F. Cunningham in 1850.) The original town fit neatly into the east half of the southeast quarter of Section 26, with section and quarter section lines forming all except the west boundary. (The Meier Store property is directly north of the original northern boundary line, adjacent to Lot 15 of the Original Town.) Mill

² The connection to the original German community was reaffirmed in the 1980s, when Melle, Germany and New Melle, MO, established a sister city relationship. (From 1980s newspaper clippings in the New Melle Vertical File, State Historical Society of Missouri.)

³ "Brief Review of New Melle's History," p. 73. The Boone-Duden Historical Society, in New Melle, has a copy of Kamper's original plat, which is labeled in German.

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Street was the original primary north-south street, and Schuetzen Street, one block west of Mill, formed the original western town boundary.

The choice of the name "Mill Street" on that early plat indicates that New Melle was the site of one of the earliest mills in the township. A review of county tax records shows that the largest businesses in the township in the 1850s were either mills or tobacco factories. The only businesses assessed for special taxes in the Callaway Township in 1851 were mills, and there were at least three mills in operation there throughout the early 1850s.⁴ The generic term "mill" in those tax records could have applied to either saw mills or flour mills, both of which were important to area commerce. It was also common for a mill to process both lumber and flour, using a single power source. The largest mill in Callaway township which was recorded in the 1860 Census of Industry, for example, was a steam mill which produced both lumber and "meal flour." Population census records indicate that that mill, which was run by "John H. Reinert and Co." was located in New Melle, close to Meier's property. The sawn lumber from which the Meier Store was constructed was no doubt purchased from Reinert or another local miller.

The New Melle Post Office was established in 1856, a move which encouraged further development in the village. By 1860, New Melle had developed into a commercial center for the surrounding countryside. The 1860 population census entries for the post office service area were extensive, and the census of industry recorded six different operations in the township, including two blacksmiths and Reinert's steam-powered mill, all of which were located in or near New Melle. Other businesses operating in town by 1860 included a wagon maker, a gunsmith, a boot and shoe shop, and a small hotel and bar room. That year also saw the establishment of the community's first public school, and the construction of a large new church of native stone by the St. Paul's Evangelical congregation.⁵

It was also during that initial period of development that the Meier General Store was established. A 1937 description of St. Charles County as it appeared in the 1890s, says "what is now the C. F. E. Meier store was then run by the Ernst Meier estate, he having started it about 1855, shortly after the town was started."⁶ Another, more recent, description of the store noted that "part of the building dated back to about 1860 and served as the town trading post."⁷ A review of early records indicates that the store was actually established sometime before 1860, by Ernst Meier's father,

⁴ "St Charles County Businesses," Typescript transcription of early county tax records, on file with the St. Charles County Historical Society, St. Charles, MO.

⁵ "Brief Review of New Melle History," pp. 73-74.

⁶ W. T Baker, "Back in the Gay Nineties in St. Charles Co., MO," (St. Charles: St. Charles County Historical Society, undated reprint of the 1937 original) p. 19.

⁷ "Historic Building to Get New Life," Boone County Connection, Jan. 2001, p. 7.

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William Meier, and that Ernst inherited it in the mid-1860s. William Meier wrote in his will of 1860 that it was his wish that his son Ernst "carrie (sic) on business at my old stand at New Melle after my death as I have in my lifetime..."⁸ Those two men probably worked in the store together when it was new; the 1860 population census lists both William Meier (age 64) and his son Ernst (age 21) as merchants, and both were living in the same household. The construction date for the building has therefore been set at ca. 1857, which is the year after the post office was officially established.

Architecturally, the Meier building can be classified as a *gable-front store*. It is a typical example of that vernacular building type in both form and original function. The gable-front store has been identified as a modest commercial building type which is most commonly associated with small-town or rural locations. As one source put it "while a good number of commercial building types have been designated for urban settings, the gable front store was most often a small-town or rural building."⁹ The description included in that account reveals that the Meier store was a typical example, in both form and function; "this frame structure, usually clad in clapboard, served as a general store, hardware or small implements store, grocery or feed store."¹⁰ Another description of the average general store also noted the popularity of the front-gabled form: "usually the gable end of the store faced the street or roadway, the ridge running at right angles."¹¹

The land upon which the store is located was in the Meier family from the earliest days of settlement in the area. A land entry and plat book for St. Charles County shows that the forty acres of land directly north of New Melle (the NE quarter of the SW quarter of Section 26, T46N, R1E) was entered by William Meier.¹² Although that entry is undated, it was probably made soon after William and Anna Meier moved to St. Charles County, around 1840.¹³ The original northern boundary of New Melle is the southern boundary of the land patented by William Meier. The store is located just a few yards north of that boundary line.

William Meier did not immediately go into the mercantile business; he is listed as a farmer in

⁸ "Last Will and Testament of William Meier," St. Charles County Probate Records, File No 2265, made 12-8-1860, filed 2-7-1865.

⁹ Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design 1870-1940: An Illustrated Glossary*, (New York: Van Nostrand Company, 1985) p. 247.

¹⁰ Gottfried and Jennings, p. 247.

¹¹ Carson, p. 191.

¹² Abstract of Title for the store property, prepared by Emmons Abstract Co. St. Charles, MO, 1965.

¹³ The 1875 St. Charles County Atlas noted that Ernst Meier had moved to the county in 1840, presumably with his parents; as he would have been two years old at the time.

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the 1850 population census, and deed records show that he purchased another 37 acre parcel of land west of his original patent in 1855, presumably for farmland as well. He may have been encouraged to start the store by the improving commercial outlook in New Melle, or may simply have decided to find a less strenuous line of work. He would have been 61 in 1857, and may have seen running a general store as a good way to spend his later years.

William Meier's estate records show that he was a relatively wealthy man at the time of his death in the mid 1860s, and that he played a major role in area commerce. Settlement of the estate included inventorying and appraising all of his property, real and personal. The resulting records indicate that he was as active in lending money as he was in running the store; probate records from his estate include a list of 48 different people for whom he held notes. Those notes, which were made between 1855 and 1865, ranged from under \$2 to over \$1,000, and totaled just over \$12,000.

The names on that list indicate that Meier had loaned money to several of the community's earliest businesses. Early New Melle businessmen on the list include gunsmith and tinner Edward Rickmers, cigar maker F. Moellering and several different sets of partners. Rickmers, who borrowed \$100 in 1861, is said to have been in the area since the 1850s, and Moellering was listed in the 1850 census as a "sigar maker" who lived very close to Meier at that time. Partnerships on the list include C. Welker and J. H. Sudbrock, presumably of the Sudbrock and Co. General Store, which was started in the 1840s, as well as mill owners John H. Reinert and Co.¹⁴

The probate records also include an extensive list of "book accounts," presumably from the store, as well as a detailed inventory of Meier's personal property. The personal property list is, for the most part, a description of the varied contents of the store. The list of items found in William Meier's store in many ways reflects mid-19th century conditions and practices in New Melle and the surrounding countryside.

Although the articles offered by Meier generally reflect the type of frontier self-reliance one might expect of the residents of a newly established rural community, there are also a few surprises. The type of things one might expect farm families to be looking for include assorted small household goods, basic agricultural implements such as plows, churns and harness, and an extensive selection of goods from which clothing could be made. It appears that most families shopping at Meier's store made most, if not all, of their clothing; the inventory included an impressive assortment of fabrics, over one thousand yards altogether, while shirts, pants, and "drawers" together totaled only 19 items. Not a single dress was listed, although there were 3 corsets and 4 hoopskirts.

Scattered among the list of utilitarian items are a few things one might not expect to see, such as "1 lot artificial flowers" and three different kinds of handkerchiefs—cotton, linen, and silk. The yard goods listed also included a number of luxurious fabrics, such as velvet, and "satinette," the

¹⁴ Rickmers and Sudbrock and Co, are included in a list of early businessmen in "Brief Review of New Melle History" p. 73.

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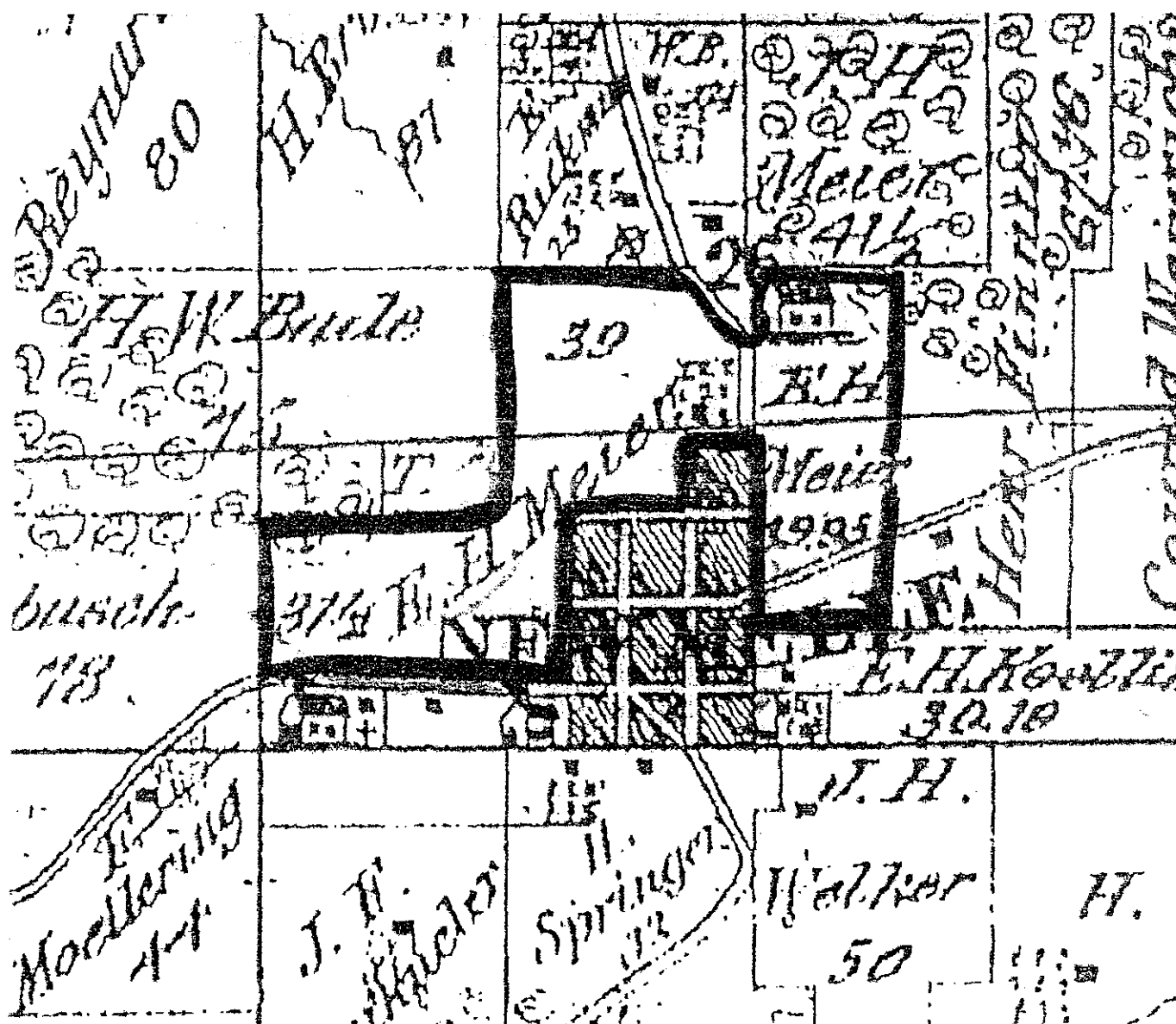
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latter of which sold for a full dollar a yard, compared to cotton flannel, which was only 30 cents.. Meier also owned an apparently extensive collection of books—the “lot” of books on the list were valued at \$47.55, compared to a cookstove, which listed at \$35, or a shovel, which was \$1.25.

Figure Three. 1875 Atlas Map of the New Melle Area.



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William Meier's will, which was written in 1860, almost five years before his death, made it clear that he expected his son Ernst to continue with the full range of business activities he had been involved with; "I will and bequeath to my son Ernst Meier all of my Estate both real and personal, books, debts and evidence of debt to manage as though I was alive and done it myself..." The only stipulation he made was that Ernst pay various amounts to his other children after the estate was settled, a task probate records show was completed promptly. Ernst came out decidedly ahead on the deal; he ended up with all of his father's land, and almost \$12,000, out of a total personal estate of just over \$15,000.

Although Ernst was living with his father and sister when the census was taken in 1860, things changed soon after; he married Catherine Louise Welker on June 27, 1860, in the new St. Paul's Lutheran Church in town.¹⁵ Ernst Meier continued to participate in the family business after his marriage, and his business dealings expanded with his new family. By the time of the 1868 state census, three of the couple's four children had been born, and he had bought several new parcels of land in the area.

St. Charles County deed records show that he participated in several real estate transactions between 1868 and 1878. In 1869, he bought just over 38 acres on the east edge of town. That parcel, added to the land north and west of town which he had inherited from his father, expanded his property to the point that it surrounded all except the very southern end of New Melle. (See Figure Three.) It was probably also about that time that he began construction on a large frame I-house which still sits just a few hundred feet northeast of the store property. That house, which is now sheathed in vinyl and part of a separate property, remained in the Meier family for decades, and served as the Meier family home into the middle part of the twentieth century. (See Figure Four.)

Ernst Meier expanded his business ventures in the 1870s as well. In 1871, he and two other men paid the impressive price of \$14,000 for the steam flour and lumber mill located on Mill Street in New Melle. He bought out one partner shortly after, and the other in 1875. The mill purchase was no doubt financed in part from the \$12,000 left after settling his father's estate. He also continued his father's practice of loaning money; deed records include several new notes made in the late 1860s and 1870s.

He continued to run the store throughout those transactions. He is listed as a "Store KPR and Mill Owner" in the patron's section of the 1875 county atlas, and a store receipt from 1869 bears his name.¹⁶ The store receipt also shows that he was carrying many of the same types of goods as had his father. The heading of the pre-printed receipt reads:

¹⁵ St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Alpha. Index to Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Burials, (St. Charles: St. Charles Genealogical Society, 1996)

¹⁶ W. R. Brink & Co., Illustrated Atlas Map of St. Charles County, MO, (Illinois: W. R. Brink & Co. 1875) p. 118.

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Meier General Store
St. Charles County, Missouri

New Melle, St. Charles, Co., Mo:

Bought of E. H. MEIER,

Dealer in

Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Boots and Shoes, Hats and Caps, Readymade Clothing, Notions, Patent Medicines, etc.

Produce Received at the Highest Market Rate.¹⁷

Another early receipt shows that, next to his family (and his dog), he considered, the buildings he owned to be among his most important possessions. In October of 1878, he ordered a number of prints from a St. Charles photographer. They included a dozen small prints each of his father, and of he and his wife together, along with three dozen prints of his children, and a half dozen shots of "Mr. Meier & Dog". The novelty items on that order included 3 "Stereoscopic views" each, of the "Store", "Residence", and "Mill," along with one "Stereoscopic Glass."¹⁸

Ernst Meier's expanding business and real estate holdings reflected a general period of economic development in New Melle. One local history has noted that "new home and store construction was at its peak in the 1870s."¹⁹ It was also about that time that commercial entries for the town started appearing in State Gazetteers. By 1877, when the town's businesses were first listed in a Gazetteer, New Melle had a population of about 300, and had 39 different businesses listed. That was to be the highest number to be recorded for the 1800s; although the population remained about the same, the number of business entries saw a gradual decrease, down to 31 in 1899.²⁰

Ownership of the Meier store changed again early in 1879, with the death of Ernst Meier, who was approximately 40 years old at the time. He had apparently been ill for some time before his death, as settlement of his estate included a payment to the local doctor to cover services rendered "during the year 1878 until the death of the deceased."²¹ Although there is no evidence that he left a will, he did apparently have his affairs in good order at the time of his death. Probate records show that the mill business, which known officially as "E. H. Meier and Co.", was administered by Henry Rinkel, a miller who may have already been a partner or employee of the mill, while everything else

¹⁷ St. Charles County Probate Records, File 2267, Jobst Meier Estate.

¹⁸ Receipt from R. Goebel, "Portrait and Landscape Photographer," Office at the Southeast corner of Second and Jefferson Streets, St. Charles, MO, receipt dated July 17, 1879, for work dated October 30, 1878.

¹⁹ Bill Schiermeier, "Early History of New Melle," Cracker Barrel Country, Vol. I (Washington, MO: Washington Missourian, 1980) p. 2.2.

²⁰ R. L. Polk and Co, Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1876-77 (St. Louis: R. L. Polk and Co.) 1877.

²¹ St. Charles County Probate Records, File No. 2323.

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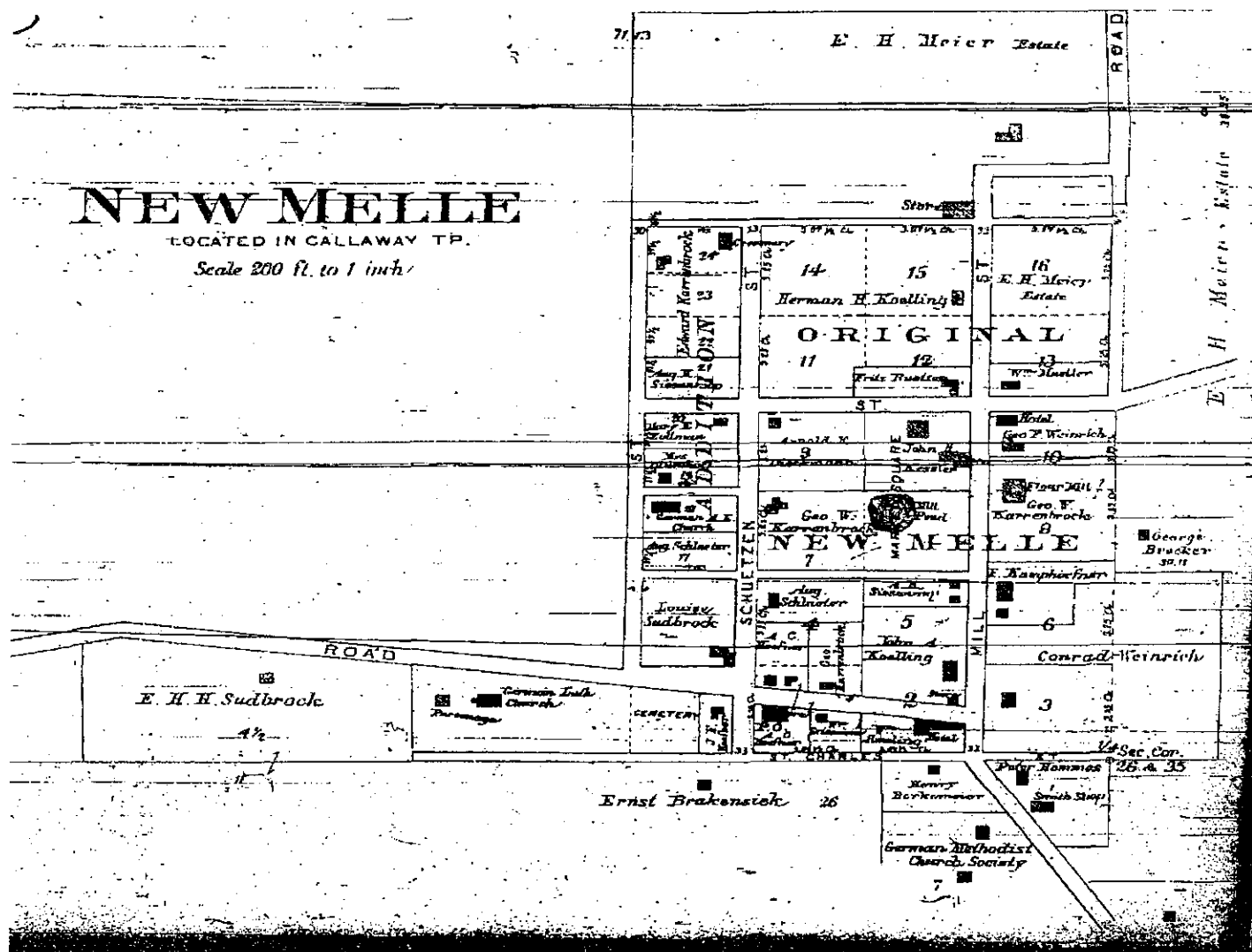
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Meier General Store
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was left in the hands of his wife, Catherine L. Meier. Catherine Meier operated the store and managed her late husband's real estate dealings for the next two decades.

Figure Four. 1905 Atlas Map of New Melle. *The Meier Store and house are in the upper part of the map; the Meier store is the only store shown here which is still in existence.*



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Meier General Store
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The 1880 census shows that she was living on Mill Street with her four children (aged 7-17) and her mother, Catherine Welker, at that time, presumably in the large frame house north of the store. Although no occupation was given for her in that census entry, she apparently took over running the store right away, a task she no doubt was involved with before Ernst's death as well. Her stewardship during that period is confirmed by probate records and the 1894 Gazetteer listing for the store, which read "Meier, Mrs. C. L., General Store."²²

Probate records for the E. H. Meier Estate are extensive, and show that he had amassed a good deal of real and personal property since inheriting his father's estate just over a decade earlier. At the time of his death, he owned 14 different parcels of land in the area, and an 1880 tax receipt in the file shows that by then, the estate still owned at least 421 acres, including just over 115 in Section 26. (Mrs. Meier sold off some land and livestock soon after his death.) The parcel containing the store and house was, acre for acre, by far the most valuable piece of real estate the Meier's owned. The tax valuation for that 39 acre parcel was \$1,800, compared to just \$360 for a nearby parcel of 38.95 acres. Meier's personal property assessment, which would have included contents of the store and home, was also listed; it was valued at \$3,000.²³

Apparently, the Meiers rented some of their property, often for shares of the crops grown there. A "List of rent collected" in the probate file shows that several payments were made in stacks of wheat or bushels of corn. The probate records also include evidence that E. H. Meier was even more involved with lending money than his father had been. The files include a long, detailed list of "notes" held by the estate; there were more than a hundred entries, with a total value, including compound interest, of \$20,366.96.

There was also a separate list of "open accounts", which appear to have been from the store, as well as a detailed inventory of store contents. The account list shows that the Meiers enjoyed a broad customer base; there were approximately 200 entries, with a total value of almost \$6,000. (Several names appeared on the list more than once.) The inventory shows that E. H. had expanded the number and types of items offered in the ten years he had been in charge of the store. The most notable change was the addition of, as his receipts proclaimed, "readymade" clothing. There was a wide assortment of clothing items, ranging from ladies underwear and hose to dozens of "suits of clothes". The store also had a surprisingly large quantity of footwear; almost 500 pairs of boots, shoes, brogans and "carpet slippers" were included in the inventory.

²² *Missouri Gazetteer and Business Directory 1893-94*, (St. Louis, MO: R.L. Polk & Co. 1894) p. 762. Oddly, earlier listings for the store are under the name "G. H. Meier"; it is not clear if that is due to a typographical error, or intended by E. H. Meier. Census records reveal no adult Meier with a first initial of G. anywhere in the county during that period.

²³ St. Charles County Collector's Office, Tax receipt #271, Oct. 20, 1880, from St. Charles County Probate Records, File 2323.

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Meier General Store
St. Charles County, Missouri

Most of the goods offered in the store, including the shoes, were purchased from dealers in St. Louis. Receipts in the file show that he had accounts with several wholesale operations there, at least two of which may have been owned by relatives. The estate had dealings with wholesale grocer Henry Meier, and boot and shoemaker John Meier, both of St. Louis. Other suppliers for the city carried such things as "Fancy Goods and Notions", "China, Glass and Queensware", and "Hardware and Cutlery."

Like his father had before him, E. H. Meier also carried a large selection of yard goods and books, many of which were individually noted in the inventory. He had at least 50 different bolts of fabric, which, like those offered by William Meier, varied from basic to luxurious; toweling could be purchased for 10 cents a yard, while cashmere was available for 75 cents. A large assortment of ribbon and related trimmings were also on hand. There were almost 300 books altogether. Most of those were school books which covered several different grade levels and subjects; they ranged from a "Hist of US" at \$1, to a "1st Reader", for a dime.

There was also a wide variety of small household items, such as coffee mills, pots, various types of dishes, and 10 "lamps and chimbleys." Grocery items included staples such as coffee, sugar, rice, and spices, as well as rather surprising amounts of eggs and butter. There were 240 dozen eggs and 288 pounds of butter. There were also a few special items, such as parasols, pocket books, and 13 different "Looking Glasses."

One descriptive account of "An Omnibus Store" written around 1876 shows that the types of items offered in the Meier Store were common to general stores of the time: "It is a grocery store...a hardware store...a shoe store...a drug store...a trimming store...a crockery store...a book and stationery store...etc."²⁴ Of the twelve different functions or categories of products listed in that long account, the only the job of Postmaster does not apply; the Post Office was located in other store businesses in new Melle during that period.

A more recent account of general stores in America also offers a generic description of the typical country store, which, judging by the contents described, could apply to the Meier store as well. Gerald Carson writes, in The Old Country Store, that:

In the interior arrangement, the dry-goods counter usually ran along the right side, as you faced the store from the front door, and was heaped with drills, sheeting, calicos, button molds and trimmings....Large bins or 'boot boxes,' five or six of them, arranged according to size, from boys' up, stood along the floor, the lids loose for easy access. They overflowed with congress gaiters, factory-made shoes for men, high-button shoes for women. No individual packaging for each pair, that came later...Elegancies in the stock, such as palm-leaf fans and parasols, suggest that the hardest part of pioneering

²⁴ "An Omnibus Store," Philadelphia Merchant, ca. 1876, quoted in Carson, pp. 192-193.

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was over....Opposite the dry goods counter...there was another counter which ran parallel to it for the entire length of the store. Showcases rested on it...Behind the counter were shelves for light groceries...the sugar and cracker barrels stood at the end of the counter. Nail kegs with their front knocked in were arranged along the front...²⁵
The layout which Carson describes in that passage roughly parallels the order in which both inventories of the store are written.

The business profile of New Melle in the late 19th century was typical of small farming towns in Missouri. It was a regional trade center, with most of the businesses serving residents of the surrounding countryside as well as those of the town itself. Many of the early businesses in town, such as the flour mill and the several wagon makers listed in the *Gazetteers*, catered almost exclusively to area farmers, while others, such as the general stores, had customers from town and country. In many cases, the general store presented a major link with the outside world, providing everything from local gossip to information about the latest trends in everything from clothing styles to farming practices. As one social history of general stores noted, "the country emporium of general merchandise seemed by the 1870s to have reached a triumphant climax in its long effort to bring the city to the country and to link the country with the city."²⁶

That was true in New Melle as well as other parts of the Midwest. There were two or three general stores in operation in New Melle throughout the last quarter of the 19th century, and their reliance upon farmers' business is reflected by the fact that two of them, including the Meier store, later expanded their inventories to include "farm implements". A description of the typical 19th century general store in the Midwest shows that most such businesses had a regional customer base: "the old general store opened its doors as early as five in the morning...on Saturday...bedlam reigned as clerks rushed madly to wait on the country trade."²⁷

Mrs. C. L. Meier ended up operating the store much longer than had either her husband, or his father before him, and she appears to have managed it quite well. The probate files for E. H. Meier's estate and for his children show that bills left open upon his death were all taken care of by early 1880, and that Mrs. Meier was even able to collect on old accounts which had been written off when her husband's estate was settled. An 1884 note in the children's file includes a page of recently collected accounts labeled "accounts returned unavailable at Final Settlement of E. H. Meier Est. but which have since been collected."

Mrs. Meier ran the store until just before the turn of the century, when her youngest child and only son, Charles, F. E. Meier, took over the business. The 1900 population census showed that she

²⁵ Carson, pp. 193-197.

²⁶ Carson, p. 191.

²⁷ Lewis Atherton, *Mainstreet on the Middle Border*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p. 47.

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Meier General Store
St. Charles County, Missouri

and Charles were still part of the same household—C. L. Meier (age 57) was listed as the head of the household, with no occupation, and her son Charles F. E. Meier (age 27) was listed as a “merchant.” Two of her grandsons, Claude and Harry McElliney, were also living there, and may have been helping their uncle run the store. It was also about that time that the store was first listed in Charles’ name in the state Gazetteer entry; the 1899 edition includes an entry for “Meier, Charles, gen. store and farm impts.”²⁸

The store business did very well under Charles F. E. Meier’s management, and it is still known by many local residents as the Charles Meier General Store. One local history noted that the “Chas E. Meier General Store at the corner of Mill and Gronenberger Streets did a thriving business...” and another noted that it was “one of the first places in town to have a television, and before that, one of the first places to sell gasoline.”²⁹ He apparently started adding to the original building around the turn of the century, as one local source noted that a grand opening for the expansion was held in 1901.³⁰ Because those additions are now missing, the period of significance for the property ends at ca. 1900.

Although Charles Meier was running the store, the land and building stayed in his mother’s name until her death in 1934. In her will, she left most of her estate, including the house and store property, to Charles. Another bequest in the will shows that the family was still in the business of lending money; she left Charles “the five shares of stock that I own in the New Melle Bank...” as well as two shares in the Central Trust Company in the city of St. Charles. The property stayed with Charles for another decade and a half, until his death in September of 1948. His widow, Anna L. Meier, sold the store property as a small separate parcel just a few months after his death.³¹ That transaction ended over a century of continuous ownership of the land by the Meier family.

The Meier Store was one of the most enduring general store operations in the history of New Melle, and it is the only 19th century general store left in the community today. It is the only store shown on the 1905 Atlas map which is still in existence. (See Figure Four.) New Melle is roughly the same size it was in 1899, and the Meir Store building today looks much as it did then. Most of the modern alterations to the building have been removed, and the store still reflects its important role in the commercial development of New Melle. The building is a rare, significant survivor. □

²⁸ Missouri Gazetteer and Business Directory 1899, (St. Louis, MO: R. L. Polk & Co. 1899) p. 871.

²⁹ Bill Schiermeier, Cracker Barrel Country, Vol. IV, (Washington, MO: Washington Missourian, 1995) p. 74, and “Historic Building to Get New Life,” p. 7.

³⁰ “Historic Building to Get New Life,” p. 7.

³¹ Abstract, and St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church Alpha. Index to Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Burials.

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Appendix: Basic Meier Family History

William (b. ca. 1796 in Germany) and Anna Meier

Ernst H. Meier (or Meyer) (b. ca. 1839 in Germany-d. early 1879.)

Elizabeth (b. ca. 1841 in Missouri)

E. H. Meier, married on June 27, 1860, in New Melle.

Wife Catherine Louise Welker (b. 1842-d. 1934)

Emma

Minna

Louisa

Charles F. E. Meier (b. ca. 1873-d. Sept. 1948.)

(Anna L. Meier, his wife)

Helena and Frances, daughters

Frances Meier is now (2002) living in a nursing home near New Melle.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Part of the NE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 26, Twp 46N, Rge.1E, and being more particularly described as follows--commencing at a cross on the sidewalk on the western line of Mill Street in the town of New Melle, MO, from whence cross on walk the northwest corner of Lot No. 15 of the original Town of New Melle, Missouri bears due South 16.5 feet; thence South 89 deg. 46' West along the north line of a 16.5 foot alley, 146.5 feet to an iron pipe; thence North 1 deg. 27' West 117.9 feet to an iron pipe; thence North 87 deg. 47' East 149.6 feet to an iron pipe in said West line of said Mill Street; thence due south along said west line 123.0 feet to the place of beginning, containing 0.409 acres, more or less.

The property, which is located at the northwest corner of Mill and Gronenberger Streets, New Melle, MO, is the same parcel recorded in Book 334, p. 1895. See Site Plan, P. 7.2, for a scale map of the boundaries.

Boundary Justification

The current boundaries encompass all of the land currently associated with the store.

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs except number 2.

Meier General Store

3668 Mill Street, New Melle

St. Charles, Missouri

Debbie Sheals

December, 2001

Negatives on file with Debbie Sheals, 406 W. Broadway, Columbia, MO 65203

List of Photographs

See photo key for indication of camera angles.

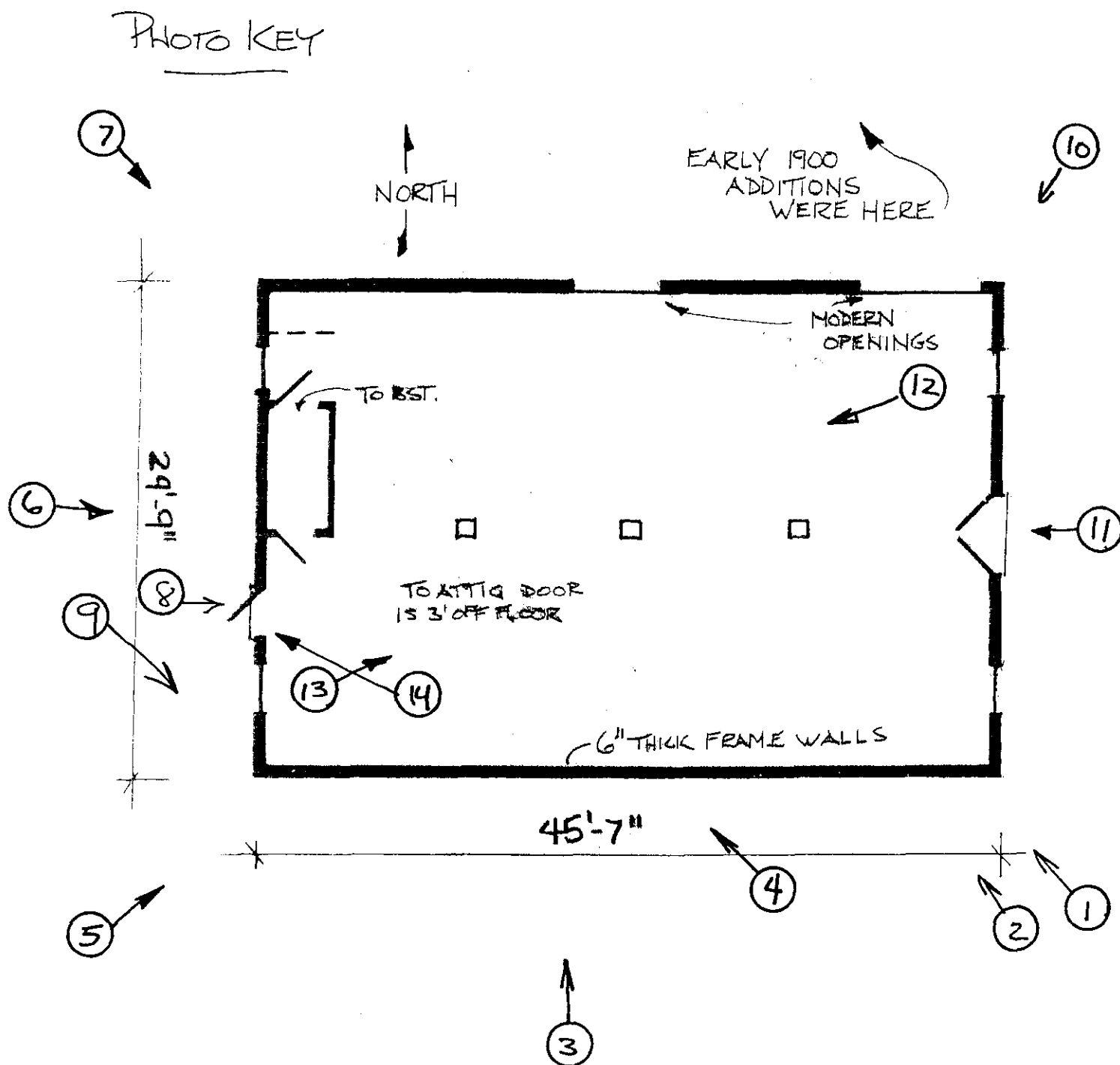
1. Southeast corner, December, 2001, March, 2002
2. Southeast corner. (Historic photo copied from a ca. 1901 post card in the file of Steve and Sally Butler.)
3. South elevation, December, 2001
4. Detail, south wall and basement window, December, 2001
5. Southwest corner, December, 2001
6. West elevation, December, 2001
7. Northwest corner, December, 2001
8. Detail, second floor rear window, December, 2001
9. Detail rear cornice return, December, 2001
10. Northeast corner, March 2002
11. Facade-east elevation, April, 2002
12. Interior, looking to back wall, December, 2001
13. Interior, looking to front wall, December, 2001
14. Detail back door and trim, December, 2001

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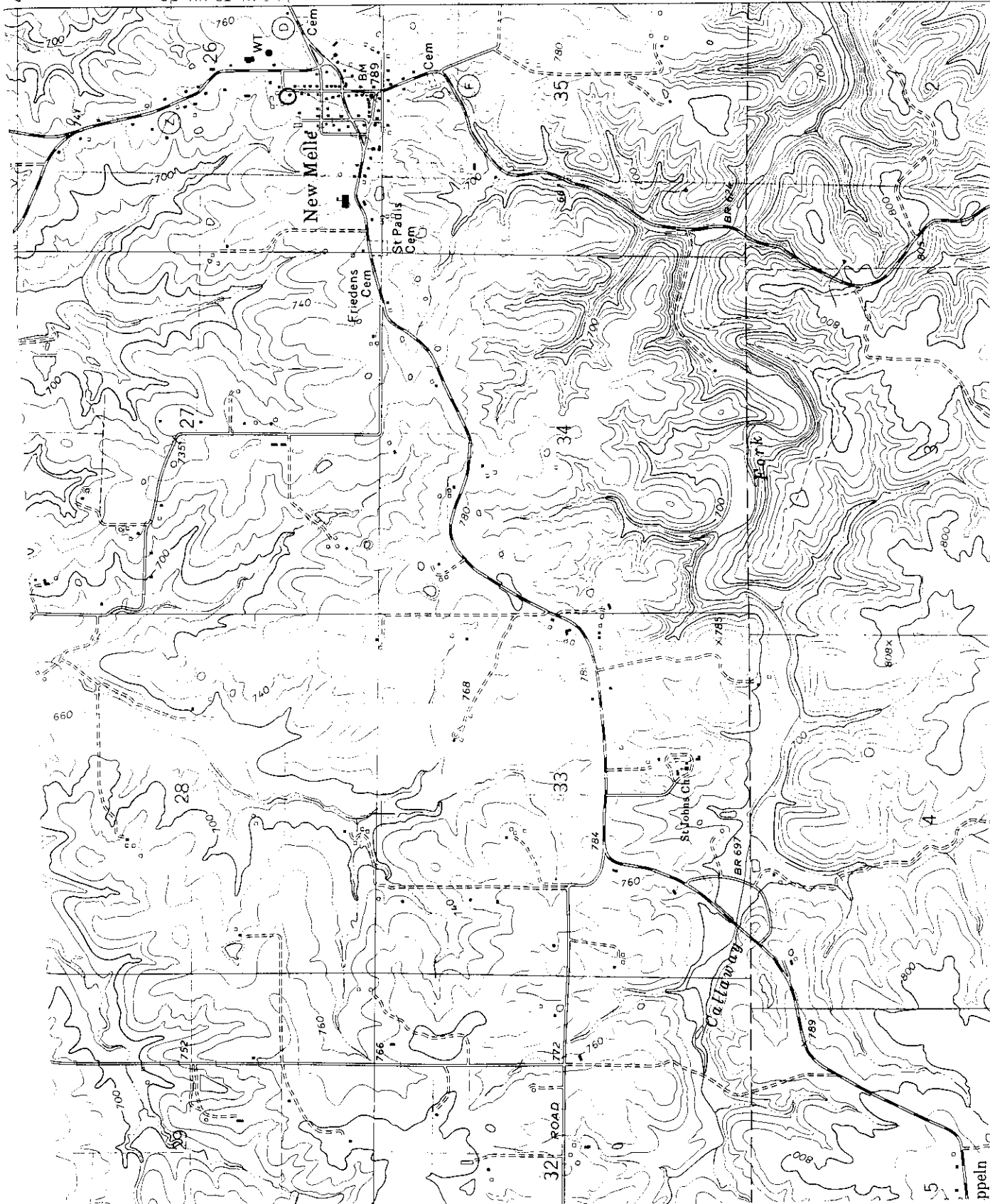
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HEIER GENERAL
STORE
NEW MELLE,
ST. CHARLES
COUNTY, MO
15/684360/
4286740

4288



4.6 MI TO HV DB

42' 30"

4286

4285

T. 46 N.

T. 45 N.

(DEFIANCE)
7861 III NE

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some
missing PHOTOS















EXTRA
PHOTOS



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11

