

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Negro Masonic Hall

other names/site number Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2

2. Location

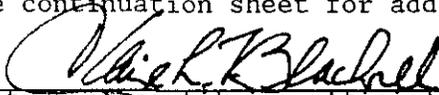
street & number 3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard [n/a] not for publication

city or town St. Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63140

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 [].)



25 Feb. 93
Date

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

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

See continuation sheet [].

Negro Masonic Hall
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing.
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function	Current Functions
SOCIAL/meeting hall	VACANT/NOT IN USE
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store	

7. Description

Architectural Classification	Materials
LATE VICTORIAL/Romanesque	foundation stone
	walls brick
	roof asphalt
	other n/a

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

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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

Areas of Significance

ETHNIC HERITAGE--BLACK

SOCIAL HISTORY

Periods of Significance

1909-1942

Significant Dates

1909

1942

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

Negro Masonic Hall
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>15</u>	<u>741350</u>	<u>4281060</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>

[] 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 Bonnie Stepenoff, Historian/Archivist
organization History and Archives Consulting date August 20, 1992
street & number P.O. Box 104403 telephone 314/635-0326
city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65110

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

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

name Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F & AM
street & number 4525 Olive Street telephone 314/361-3044
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63108

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

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SUMMARY: The Negro Masonic Hall (now called the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 or Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2), 3615-3619 Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard (formerly Easton Avenue), St. Louis, Missouri, is a three-story late-nineteenth-century brick commercial building of irregular shape, with two entrances leading to retail spaces, and a third leading to a staircase that ascends to grand meeting halls on the second and third floors. Constructed in 1886, Prince Hall Lodge #2 is a vernacular commercial building, exhibiting Romanesque Revival influences in its arched window openings and ornamental brick work. Cast-iron pilasters and other decorative features adorn the first-floor facade. From 1886 through the mid-twentieth century, a variety of retail businesses occupied the first floor. From 1909 until the 1980s, black Masonic lodges held meetings on the second and third floors. In 1942, the Negro Masonic Hall Association, owner of the building since 1909, received a permit from the city to take down the brick on the third-story of the primary facade and rebuild it "plumb and straight."¹ As a result of the 1942 alterations, the appearance of the third-story facade differs from its original appearance in the following ways: 1. A corner tower has been lost. 2. A decorative parapet has been lost. 3. Arched window openings were replaced with rectangular openings. However, the shadows of arches remain in the brickwork above the windows, and ornamental sills were retained. 4. A Masonic emblem cut in stone has been added. The altered third-story facade remains highly compatible in materials and style with the essentially unmodified first and second stories of the building. From 1909 until 1986, the building served as a meeting place for African-American lodges of the Masons; since 1986, the building has been vacant. After its abandonment in the late 1980s, the building deteriorated to the extent that window panes and sash and exterior doors are missing. The City of St. Louis has covered some cast-iron decorative features with boards, but these significant decorative features remain intact. The shabby appearance of the building is unfortunate, but understandable, in a neighborhood that has suffered a long period of economic distress. However, the building retains substantial integrity and constitutes an important resource on a boulevard that the city plans to revitalize. This street has been a busy commercial thoroughfare for more than a century and figures prominently in plans for urban redevelopment. With its ornamental brickwork, cast-iron ornamentation, and distinctive shape, Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 presents an imposing facade on Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard, a major thoroughfare in downtown St. Louis. Because of its location on a corner lot, just west of a fifteen-foot-wide alley and also because of its "flat-iron" shape, the building also presents a narrow front

¹ Engineering records for City Lot #1863, October 9, 1942, Archives, City Hall.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

facing southeast toward the nearby intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. and Grand Avenue. The property consists of a city lot, approximately 60 feet by 90 feet in overall dimensions, fronting on Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., and containing one building. The environment of the property is a distressed commercial district, once densely developed, that has suffered the loss of many buildings. Just north of Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2, approximately five feet from its rear wall and fronting on Cozens Avenue, is a smaller two-story brick structure of the same date and basic style that has suffered irreparable fire damage. Despite the surrounding conditions, Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 remains structurally sound and conveys a sense of history.

Characteristics of the Building

Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 is a wedge-shaped three-story brick commercial building with a narrow facade facing the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. (formerly Easton Avenue) and an alley and a fifty-eight-foot facade facing the Boulevard. Overall dimensions of the building are approximately sixty feet (width) by eighty-six feet (depth). The building is five-sided, with the dimensions of each side being approximately nine feet (southeast), fifty-eight feet (south), sixty-one feet (west), fifty feet (north), and eight-four feet (east). The front (south facade) of the building has three bays; the narrow side has one bay, and the longer (east) side of the building has nine bays. The foundation is of rubble stone, and the walls are of brick, with some cast iron ornamentation on the first story of the south facade. The roof is flat.

Prominent features of the primary facade (facing the Boulevard) are two recessed entrances to the retail spaces on the first floor and a third entrance to the steep stairway that leads to the second- and third-floor meeting rooms. All the doors are missing, but cast-iron pilasters and other store-front ornamentation remains on the first story. This first story also features a large shop window at the corner facing the boulevard and the alley. The westernmost door (leading to the meeting rooms on the upper floors) has sidelights and transom. The first and second stories have not been substantially altered since the late-nineteenth century.

The second story features four large arched window openings, one in the narrow side, and three in the facade facing the Boulevard. The large window in the central bay facade has a high round arch with notable brick articulation. The smaller windows that flank this central bay have nearly flat arches. White stone sills accent the window openings. All windows are missing.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

The third story reveals the 1942 alterations in the loss of the corner tower and an original ornamental parapet. However, the brickwork and remaining decorative details of this altered third-story facade are compatible with the lower stories. The eight window openings are simple rectangles with brick articulation in the form of arches. Above the two windows in the central bay of the third-story facade is a Masonic emblem cut in stone. These third-story windows are graced with ornamental sills that complement those of the second-story windows. As previously mentioned, the original corner tower above the narrow side of the building was lost in the 1942 renovation.

Despite the deterioration of the roof, plaster ceilings, and walls, the interior retains many significant features. The westernmost entrance opens to reveal a steep narrow staircase with wooden wainscoting. The second floor of the building contains a large meeting room, lit by tall narrow windows. Post and beam construction of the building is visible in this wide space. Door and window frames have bull's eye moldings. The eastern end of the room contains a dais. Judging from some debris left in the room, this second-floor meeting space apparently served auxiliary organizations, including the women's groups associated with the Freemasons.

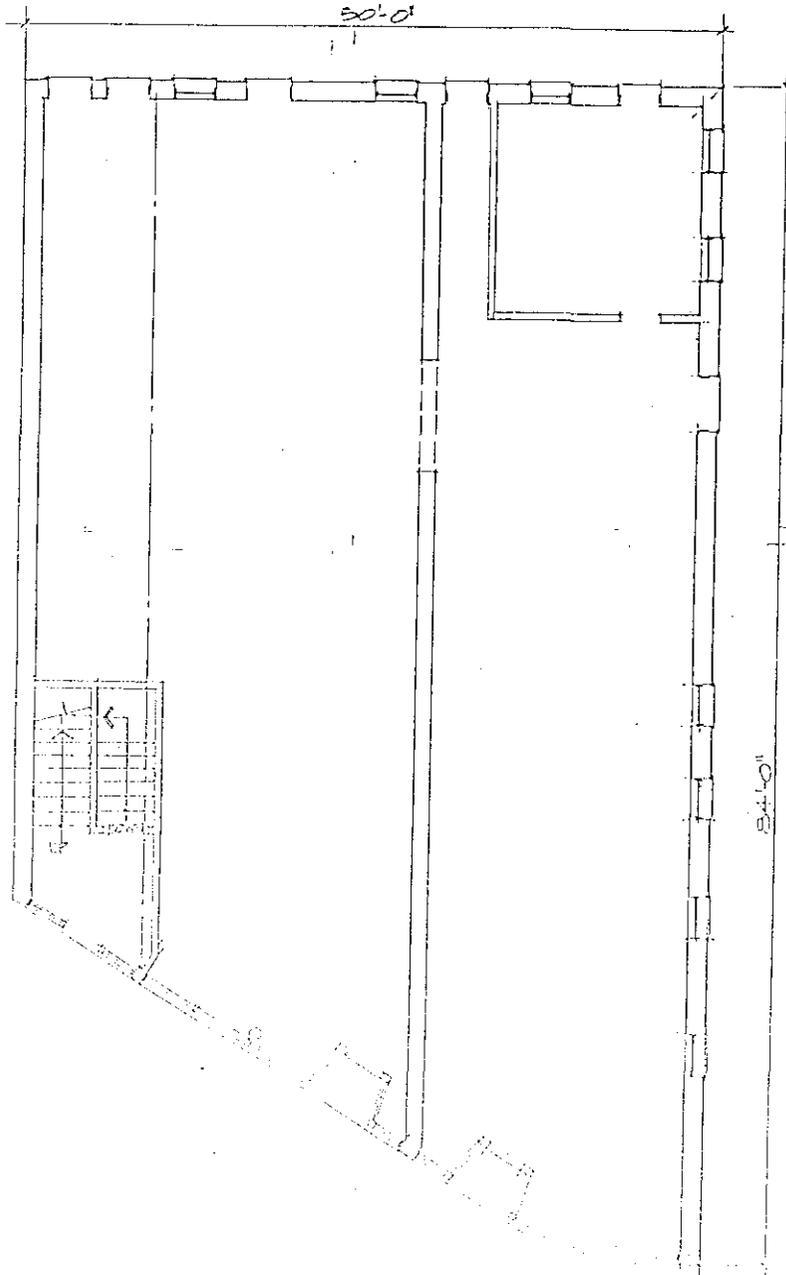
The third-floor meeting room served the major Masonic organizations. Evidence of the secret ritualistic character of the groups remains in the door with its round eye-level opening with a movable cover. This room possesses an aura of grandeur in its size, irregular shape, and high narrow windows. Architectural details include bull's-eye moldings on door and window openings.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri



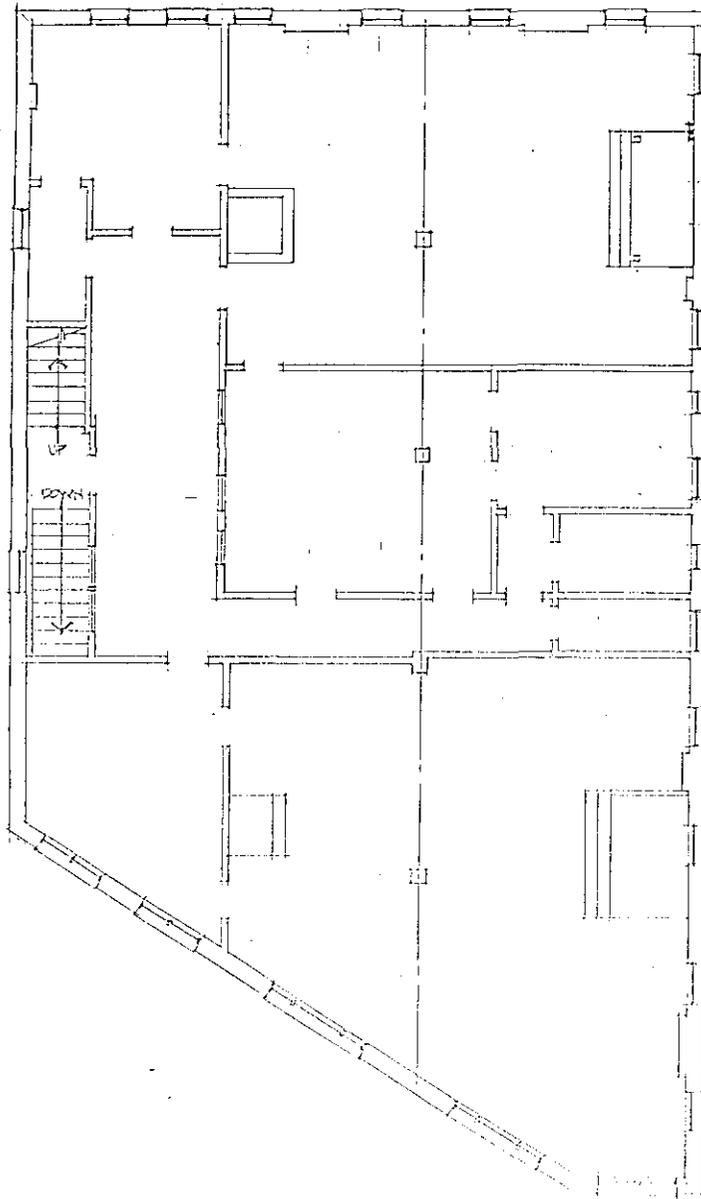
Architectural drawing showing the floor plan of the Negro Masonic Hall, St. Louis, Missouri. The drawing includes dimensions and structural details.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri



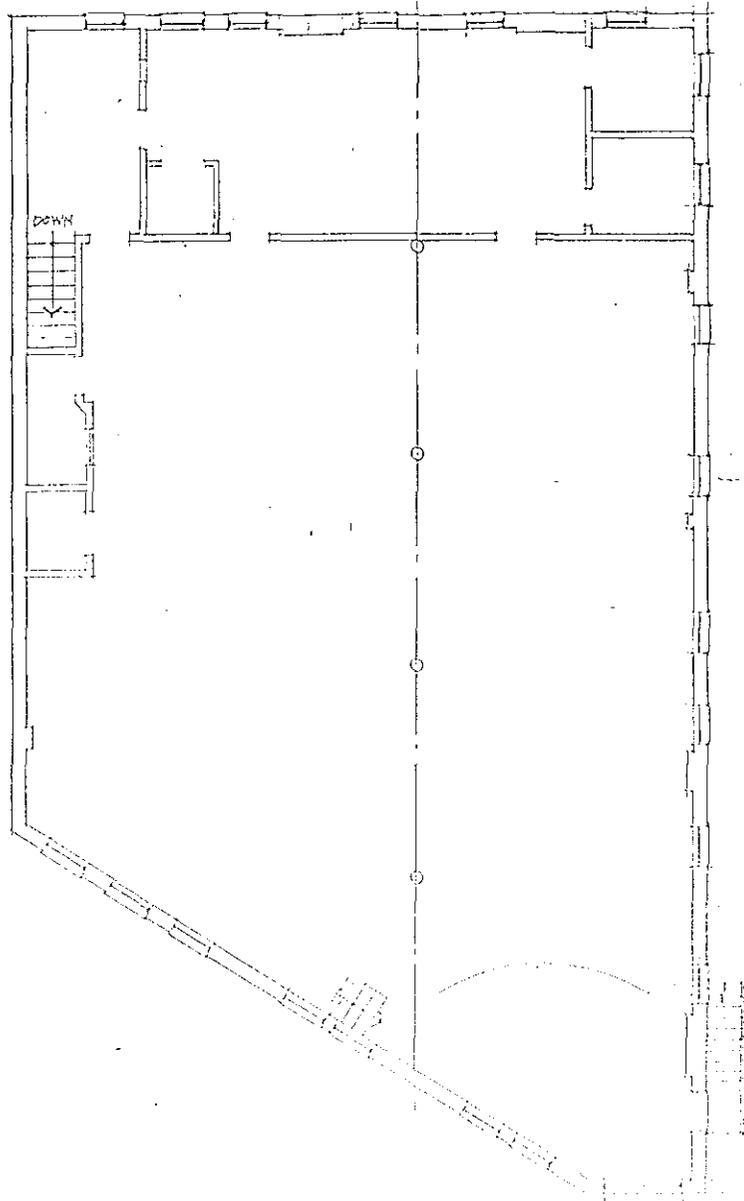
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
JULY 1

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri



NEGRO MASONIC HALL
FLOOR PLAN

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

SUMMARY: The Negro Masonic Hall (now called the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 or Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2), 3615-3619 Martin Luther King Blvd. (formerly Easton Avenue), St. Louis, Missouri, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The property is significant in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage -- Black. The name "Prince Hall" reflects the reverence of black Freemasons for an eighteenth century black New Englander named Prince Hall, who was the first person in America to organize African-Americans in a Masonic lodge. The Negro Masonic Hall, now known as the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2, was formerly the primary meeting place for St. Louis' black Masons, although it is now vacant. St. Louis' black Masons have moved their headquarters to another building. But the building known as Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 is historically significant because it is the earliest extant building owned by black Masonic groups in the city. This important meeting place served the African-American community during a crucial period of in-migration, racial enmity, increasing segregation, economic change, and social reform, between 1909 and 1942. Many historians have asserted that benevolent associations, including the black Freemasons, were second in importance only to the church in building solidarity in the black community. Black Masonic organizations contributed to the progress of the black community by encouraging African-Americans to establish and operate businesses. Benevolent fraternal organizations reached their zenith in the black community between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War II. The historical association of Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 with an elite, ritualistic, community-spirited fraternal organization is evident in the high-ceilinged interior spaces used as meeting rooms and in the ornamental facade of the building. The Negro Masonic Hall Association purchased the building in 1909, at a time when black Masonic groups were making a concerted effort to move from rented meeting places into buildings that they owned themselves. The Association altered the third-story facade of the building in 1942 in order to preserve its structural soundness. Despite these alterations and subsequent deterioration of some features, the building retains sufficient integrity in form and details to reflect its importance as the primary meeting hall for St. Louis' African-American Masonic lodges between 1909 and World War II.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Prince Hall Lodges in St. Louis

By 1909, when the Negro Masonic Hall Association purchased the building at 3615-3619 Easton Avenue (now Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard), black Freemasonry had a long tradition in St. Louis. Prominent black leaders organized the first lodge, Prince Hall,¹ in 1858, the second, Lone Star, in 1860, and the third, H. McGee Alexander, in 1860.² These early St. Louis lodges functioned under the jurisdiction of the Ohio Grand Lodge. But in 1865, the St. Louis lodges petitioned to form a Grand Lodge of Missouri, and the petition was granted in June of that year. Until the early twentieth century, most of the Masonic organizations met in rented halls. But by 1909, the Masonic lodges of St. Louis had raised the money to purchase their own meeting place.

Originally, the building at 3615-3619 Easton Avenue served as a commercial structure. On August 9, 1886, Felix Raeman obtained a permit to construct a "three-story brick store with rooms above" at a cost of \$10,000 on his property facing Easton Avenue between Grand and Spring.³ One month later, the same man obtained a permit to construct an adjacent two-story brick tenement house at a cost of \$4,000 on the same lot, but facing Cozens Avenue.⁴ The property facing Easton Avenue changed hands several times between 1887 and 1909, when James Lightholder sold it to the Negro Masonic Hall Association for \$22,500.⁵

¹ The Lodge was called Prince Hall No. 10; the second and third lodges formed in St. Louis were called Lone Star No. 22 and H. McGee Alexander No. 8 when they were established under the Grand Lodge of Ohio. These three lodges were the first to function under the Missouri Grand Lodge. Now they are called Prince Hall No. 1, Lone Star No. 2, and H. McGee Alexander No. 3. See "Historical Data" In Official Proceedings 1971, p. 4.

² Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Missouri, Official Proceedings, 1971, p. 4.

³ City of St. Louis, Building Permit, August 9, 1886, for City Lot 1863, on microfilm at the Archives of the City of St. Louis, City Hall.

⁴ City of St. Louis, Building Permit, September 1886, on file in the City of St. Louis, Building Division, Room 425 City Hall.

⁵ City of St. Louis, Recorder of Deeds, Deed Book 2200, page 449, on file in the Archives, City Hall.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

The Negro Masonic Hall Association rented the first floor to a variety of retail businesses owned by African-Americans and utilized the second and third floors as meeting spaces. On November 22, 1909, the Association obtained a permit to complete minor alterations, amounting to \$150, to the building.⁶ In 1917, the Association attached a fire escape, constructed by the Central Iron Works, to the east side of the building, leading to the alley.⁷ In 1918 and again in 1921, the Association received permits for minor alterations,⁸ and in 1928, the Association undertook more extensive projects.⁹ The major change in the building came in 1942, when the Association received permission to rebuild the brick wall on the south (primary) facade of the building above the second-floor joist line and to replace a fire escape.¹⁰

By 1951, the black Freemasons of St. Louis had relocated their headquarters to another building in the city's Central West End. However, some local black Masonic groups continued to meet in the building on Easton Avenue. Since 1942, as previously stated, the building remained substantially unchanged until the 1980s, when it was abandoned and subsequently suffered deterioration. The tenement house (facing Cozens Ave.) succumbed to fire, but the Masonic hall (facing Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.) remains structurally sound.

⁶ Building Permit, November 22, 1909 (City Lot #1863), Archives, City Hall.

⁷ Building Permit, February 23, 1917 (City Lot #1863), Archives, City Hall.

⁸ Building Permits, October 11, 1918, and December 3, 1921 (City Lot #1863), Archives, City Hall.

⁹ Building Permits, June 16, 1928, and July 2, 1928 (City Lot #1863), Archives, City Hall.

¹⁰ Engineering records for City Lot #1863, October 9, 1942, Archives, City Hall.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Social History

When the Negro Masonic Hall Association acquired the property in 1909,¹¹ there were nine different groups of African-American Freemasons in St. Louis.¹² These groups included among their members many of the most prominent educators, businessmen, and professionals in the local black community.¹³ The various Masonic organizations that met in this lodge attempted to improve the lives of black St. Louisans by providing relief benefits for members, contributing to charities, supporting public education programs, and instilling the virtues of hard work and community service in their members.

The Prince Hall Freemasons also encouraged the growth of private businesses in the black community.¹⁴ By 1933, black St. Louisans had established more than 550 business concerns, valued at more than one million dollars, and employing more than one thousand people.¹⁵ The most common types of businesses included barber shops, ice and coal suppliers, beauty shops, lunch rooms, cafes, and billiard parlors.¹⁶ Between 1909 and 1942, many of these types of small businesses occupied space on the lower floors of the Negro Masonic Hall.

¹¹ City of St. Louis, Recorder of Deeds, Deed Book 2200, page 449, deed recorded, March 16, 1909.

¹² Gould's Street and Avenue Directory of St. Louis, 1909, p. 123, lists the following lodges as among those meeting at 3619 Easton Avenue: Prince Hall #1, Lone Star #2, H. McGhee Alexander #3, Onward #17, J.Q. Johnson #30, True Blue #107, Future Great #60, Lily of the Valley, and Widow's Son #105.

¹³ One prominent member of the Widow's Son Lodge was educator James Milton Turner. See Gary R. Kremer, "The World of Make-Believe: James Milton Turner and Black Masonry," Missouri Historical Review 74 (October 1979): 50-71.

¹⁴ Lorenzo Greene, Gary R. Kremer, and Anthony Holland, Missouri's Black Heritage (St. Louis: Forum Press, 1980), 102.

¹⁵ Ira Reid, A Study of the Industrial Status of Negroes in St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis: Welfare Planning Committee, 1934), 33-34.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Between 1909 and 1942, St. Louis' Black Masons served a community experiencing rapid population growth, racial discrimination, and a struggle for economic survival. Between 1890 and 1930, the black population of St. Louis increased by threefold, and the percentage of blacks in the city increased from 5.9% to 11.4%.¹⁷ Patterns of discrimination confined them to a few neighborhoods and limited their chances for economic success.¹⁸ The black Freemasons who met in this hall attempted to aid newcomers to St. Louis by opening membership to those who could afford it, providing a safety net for members and their dependents, contributing to charities, and speaking out on issues relating to social betterment.

Ethnic Heritage -- Black
Prince Hall Freemasonry

America's black Masonic lodges trace their descent directly from an organization chartered by the mother lodge of England in the eighteenth century. A young black man named Prince Hall first won admittance to a Masonic lodge in Boston in 1775. During the 1780s, Hall and his associates won a charter for an African lodge. From those beginnings, Prince Hall Freemasonry spread rapidly among free blacks, especially in urban centers.¹⁹ The number and size of Prince Hall lodges increased rapidly after the Civil War.²⁰ In 1865, a group of St. Louisans, who already practiced Masonic rituals, successfully petitioned the Grand Lodge of the United States for a charter of constitution to organize a Grand Lodge of Missouri.²¹

Historians have produced an ample literature on the significance of Prince Hall Freemasonry among African-Americans. Loretta Williams, William Muraskin, and other historians have placed benevolent societies, including Freemasons, second only to the church in importance to the solidarity of the black community. In his pathbreaking study of the black community in Philadelphia at the turn of the century, W.E.B. Du Bois observed the importance of secret

¹⁷ Reid, Study of the Industrial Status of Negroes, p. 2.

¹⁸ Reid, "Study," p. 7.

¹⁹ Loretta J. Williams, Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities (Columbia: University Press, University of Missouri Studies No. 69, 1980), 12.

²⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

²¹ Official Proceedings (1909), p. 11.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

ritualistic societies, which functioned, he wrote, as "a pastime from the monotony of work, a field for ambition and intrigue, a chance for parade, and insurance against misfortune".²²

While some historians, such as E. Franklin Frazier, have stressed the escapism inherent in the rituals of Masonry, others, such as William Muraskin, have stressed the engagement of Prince Hall lodges in social issues.²³ In a recent study of black Freemasonry, Loretta Williams commented that these secret societies appealed to the more economically successful members of the community, who identified with the prevailing ideals of individual effort, hard work, and success. Economically successful African-Americans found that no matter how much they accomplished, they faced racial prejudice and ostracism. For this group of black achievers, Williams wrote, fraternal organizations provided "buffers from the dissonance between achieved status and ascribed status."²⁴ While performing this psychological function, however, participation in Masonic groups also prompted community involvement. Despite its locus in the middle class, black Freemasonry traditionally addressed the issues of civil rights and segregation, even during the period between the Reconstruction and the Great Depression, when the United States officially turned its back on racial problems.²⁵

Lorenzo Greene, Gary R. Kremer, and Anthony Holland have pointed out the importance of black fraternal groups in the state of Missouri, especially in the years between the Reconstruction and the mid-twentieth century. In Missouri's Black Heritage, these historians stated:

Black fraternal groups and lodges became extremely popular during these years [after 1877]. They provided blacks with social cohesion and solidarity. These groups tried to take care of their destitute members, providing relief when it was unavailable elsewhere. ... The Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Missouri ... established a Masonic Home near Hannibal, Missouri, in 1908. The home cared for elderly and impoverished Masons and orphans of

²² Ibid., 85.

²³ See E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class (Chicago, 1957), and Muraskin, previously cited.

²⁴ Ibid., 87.

²⁵ Muraskin, "Middle-class Blacks," 219-236.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Masons. It remained a mainstay of the Masonic community until the mid-twentieth century.²⁶

The St. Louis Masons, who met in the lodge hall at 3615-3619 Easton Avenue (now Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.) contributed to the Masonic Home near Hannibal and other charitable causes. Black Freemasonry added an element of stability to an urban black community during a time of population growth, stress, and change.

After purchasing the building in 1909, the St. Louis Masons hosted the annual meeting of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Missouri in August of that year. In his keynote address, the Grand Master of Missouri noted that three St. Louis lodges (Prince Hall, Lone Star, and H. McGee Alexander) had officially introduced Masonry to the state. The first meeting of the state's lodge was held in St. Louis on December 20 of 1866.²⁷ At the time of the 1909 meeting, the state boasted more than one hundred lodges, with nine of them located in St. Louis.

In the years before World War I, many lodges, including those in St. Louis and one in Parkville, Mo., purchased permanent buildings in which to conduct meetings.²⁸ The Grand Master commented in 1910 that "There has been no abatement in the spirit of acquisition and the idea is taking hold of lodges and as a result we are having an increased number that [are] securing homes for themselves."²⁹ The Grand Master encouraged the purchase of lodge halls as an affirmation of the importance of the organizations and warned that, because of solidifying patterns of discrimination, it might become difficult in the near future for black people to obtain any property at all in desirable locations.³⁰

²⁶ Greene, Missouri's Black Heritage, 102.

²⁷ Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, Official Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Communication, August 11, 12, and 13, 1909, p. 11. The Official Proceedings are on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

²⁸ Official Proceedings (1909), pp. 125-140.

²⁹ Official Proceedings (1910), p. 16.

³⁰ Ibid.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

In 1917, the Missouri lodges took a stand against racism. During the destructive race riots in East St. Louis, Missouri's black Freemasons lent their support to efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to intervene in the explosive situation and provide relief for refugees.³¹

Missouri's lodges supported the military effort during World War I. These Masons had a long tradition of supporting black military units, including the Ninth Cavalry, centered in Douglas, Arizona.³² More than 350 black Freemasons from Missouri served in the First World War, and two died in service to their country.³³

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the black Masons of St. Louis continued to support the Masonic Home and to contribute to burial and relief funds, providing death benefits and a kind of social insurance to members and dependents. The Prince Hall Masons also made an effort to help new immigrants adjust to city life, obtain jobs, and secure an education for their children. Missouri Masons stressed the value of education and raised money to help pay college tuition for members' children.³⁴

In 1932, the Committee of Education for the Grand Lodge of Missouri collected data demonstrating the inferiority of black schools and successfully lobbied the state legislature for an increased appropriation for black education. The Grand Lodges of other states officially praised Missouri's actions and encouraged all lodges to emulate them.³⁵

In summary, the Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 served as a meeting place for important organizations within the black community of St. Louis. These fraternal groups provided an affirmation of status for African-Americans who had achieved economic success in a society that placed great obstacles in their path. The rituals, costumes, and parades of Freemasonry gave them a valuable escape from everyday problems and a chance to affirm their identity

³¹ Official Proceedings (1923), p. 23.

³² Official Proceedings (1915), p. 132.

³³ Official Proceedings (1919), p. 24.

³⁴ Official Proceedings, 1922, 1923.

³⁵ Muraskin, "Middle-class Blacks," 227-228.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

as important members of the black community. In addition, the Masonic lodges added to the solidarity of that community by stressing service to others and providing economic aid through relief funds and charitable activities. Despite their locus in the black middle class, black Masonic lodges took a visible stand against discrimination and poverty. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Missouri's black Masons played an especially active role in supporting improved education for black youth. Because of its associations with these important social groups and with the African-American community, Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 is eligible for National Register listing in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage -- Black.

Period of Significance

The Great Depression seriously weakened black Masonic organizations in St. Louis and other urban centers.³⁶ Under New Deal programs, the government began providing some of the relief services previously supported by the fraternal groups. Economic distress made it difficult for many members to pay the necessary dues,³⁷ and membership dropped sharply in the 1930s. After the Depression and World War II, Missouri's Prince Hall Freemasons reorganized, but they never achieved their pre-Depression strength. In 1926, there were more than one hundred lodges in the state; in 1933, there were about 74 lodges, and in 1971, there were about 65 lodges.³⁸ After the war, St. Louis' Prince Hall Freemasons moved their headquarters to 4525 Olive Street, although some groups continued to meet in the building described in this nomination. Consequently the period of greatest significance for Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2 is from 1909, when the black Freemasons purchased the building, and 1942, the year that marks the end of the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II.

³⁶ William A. Muraskin, Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 113-117.

³⁷ Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Missouri, Official Proceedings, 1933, p. 101.

³⁸ See the Official Proceedings for these years.

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Negro Masonic Hall
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Woodson, Carter G. The Negro Professional Man. Washington, D.C.: Association
for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1934.

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the intersection of Grand Lane and Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., proceed northwest along the right-of-way of Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. to the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. and the western edge of the alley which extends between Cozens Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., the point of beginning; then proceed northwest along the right-of-way of Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. 58.02 feet; then proceed northeast along the property line of 3621 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. 62.36 feet; then proceed at right angles east 12 feet; then proceed at right angles south 1.36 feet; then proceed at right angles east 38 feet; then proceed southwest along the west line of the alley 91.12 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the south and east portion of Lot 23 in Block 3 of Page's Third West Addition to the City of St. Louis which retains integrity and was historically associated with the property.

Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge # 2
 3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd., St. Louis (Independent City)
 15/741356/4281060



(WEBSTER GROVES)
 7961 III SE



Mapped by the Geological Survey
 Revised by the Army Map Service
 Published for civil use by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from planetable surveys by the Geological Survey 1930 and 1933. Planimetric detail revised from aerial photographs taken 1952. Field check 1954

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grids based on Illinois coordinate system, west zone and Missouri coordinate system, east zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 2 meters south and 9 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge # 2
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard
St. Louis (City), MO

Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff

June 9, 1992

Negative M05H P0

View looking north

Photo #1



Most Worshipful Princes Hall Grand Lodge #2
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd
St. Louis (City), Mo.

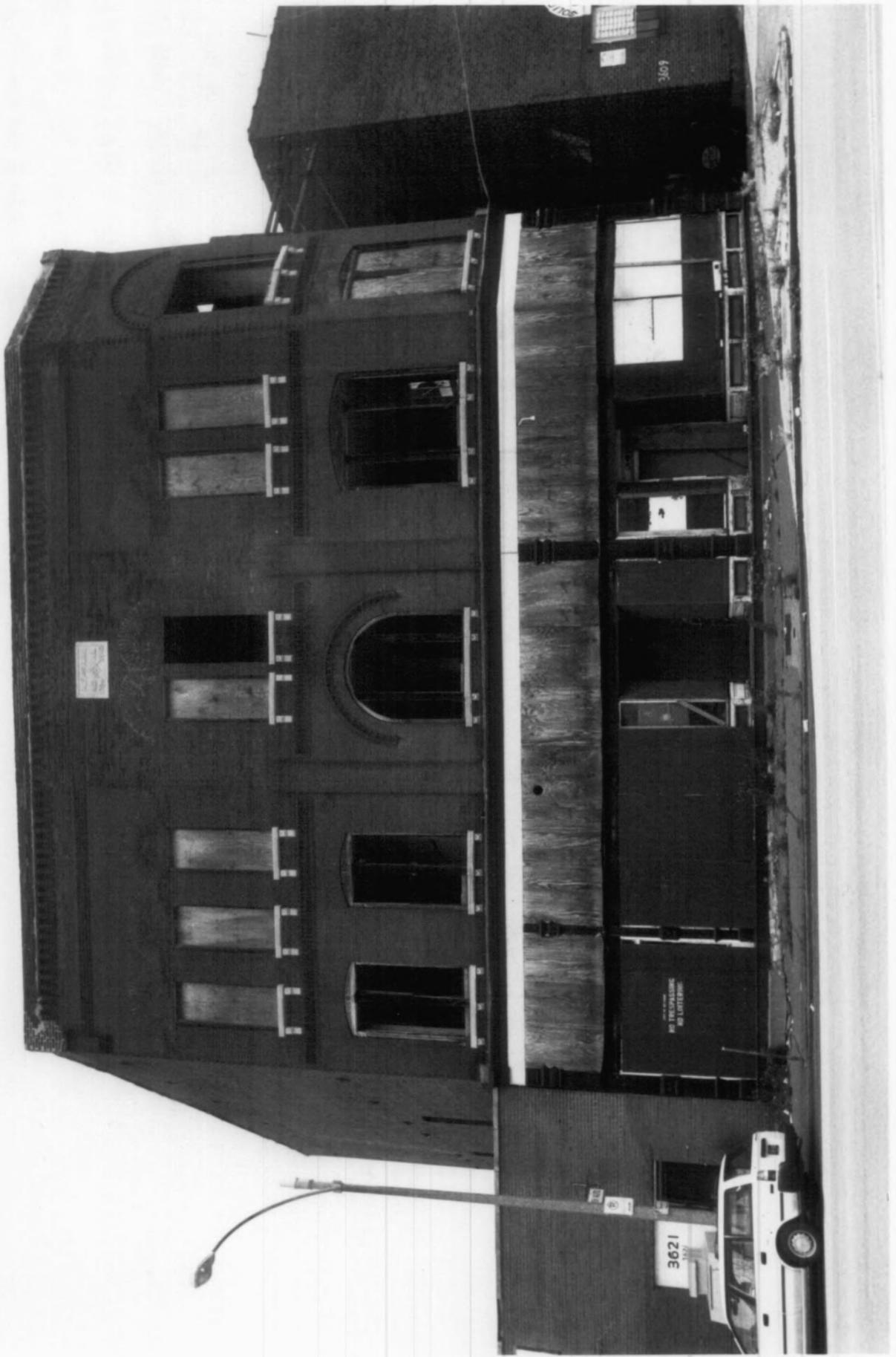
Photographer Bonnie Stepenoff

June 9, 1992

Negative: Mo. SHPO

View looking north

Photo #2



Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge #2
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.

St. Louis (City), MO

Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff

June 9, 1992

Negative: mo SHPO

View looking northwest

Photo #3



Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge # 2
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd
St. Louis (City), MO

Photographer: Bonnie Stopenoff
June, 9, 1992

Negatives: MO SHPO

Interior, 2nd floor meeting room, looking east
Photo # 4



Most Worshipful: Princetall Grand Lodge # 2
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.

St. Louis (City), Mo.

Photographer: Bonnie Stepehoff -

June 9, 1992

Negative: Mo. SHPO

Interior, 3rd floor meeting room, looking South
Photo #5



Negro Masonic Hall
3615-19 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
St Louis (City), MO

UNKNOWN
CIRCA 1910
St. Louis Community Development Agency
historic photo, view looking north
6 of 6

