

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received

date entered

## 1. Name

historic

and/or common D. W. Newcomer's Sons Funeral Home

## 2. Location

street &amp; number 1331 Brush Creek

not for publication

city, town Kansas City

vicinity of

state Missouri 64110

code 29

county Jackson

code 095

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military

<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name D. W. Newcomer's Sons

street &amp; number 1331 Brush Creek

city, town Kansas City

vicinity of

state Missouri 64110

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds

Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City Annex

street &amp; number 415 East 12th Street

city, town Kansas City

state Missouri 64106

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Kansas City: A Place in Time

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1977

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Commission

city, town Kansas City

state Missouri

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

D. W. Newcomer's Sons, 1331 Brush Creek Boulevard, is located in Kansas City's south district. The stucco building, with an irregular plan, is located at the southwest corner of Brush Creek Boulevard and The Paseo, with the main entrance facing north. It sits back approximately 100 feet from The Paseo with a frontage of approximately 155 feet along The Paseo. The north facade has a frontage of approximately 185 feet on Brush Creek Boulevard. The building contains approximately 3,600 square feet.

### CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND COLORS

The stucco walls of this structure are painted a light beige. The building has a reinforced concrete basement.

The building was constructed in two phases. In 1925 the wing fronting along The Paseo was constructed with its longitudinal axis running north and south (site plan map #A). The general contractor for this section was the Collins Brothers Construction Co. In 1936 the second building phase was undertaken and consisted of: 1) an addition to the original structure (site plan map #D), 2) the erection of a two-story wing, running north to south and fronting on Virginia Street (site plan map #C); and a wing running east to west that connects the two north/south wings (site plan map #B). A formal courtyard area with fountains was provided in front of the east/west connecting wing (site plan map #E).

### EAST FACADE

An entrance is centrally located on the east facade and consists of a gabled area containing a nail-studded wood door of 18 panels. Six of the panels are of wood, while 12 are glass, covered with wrought iron designs. The door is approached by four steps flanked by a wrought iron hand railing. The door has a flat bracketed hood entablature, decorative stone frieze of wreath of swags, and a modified egg-and-dart door surround. Wrought iron Spanish style lanterns are placed on each side of the door.

South of the entrance door are three doors set in recessed rounded arches. Each door contains glass lights, side lights, and a fan-shaped transom area. North of the entrance door are three double French doors. All six doors open onto small balconies at ground level that are railed with wrought iron.

At the north end of this facade is the chapel area, distinguished by the protrusion of a pentagonal apse. It contains an arcaded, one-panel door with 12 lights, surrounded by incised molding with an octagonal relief medallion above the door. On the sides flanking it are casement windows with eight lights and full iron window grills.

At the south end of this facade is a porte-cochere.

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NORTH FACADE

The central portion of this facade is recessed, providing space for a rectangular formal garden area. In front of the garden area, providing a screen from the street and a bridge between the east and west buildings, is a double row of Tuscan columns. Carved wood beams are supported by these columns, forming an open pergola.

The central portion of the courtyard contains a shallow, rectangular concrete pool. An upright rectangular slab is at the south end of the pool. A carved lion's head is applied to the slab with a spout for a single stream of water. A small wall fountain is located on one of the east walls of the courtyard area.

South of the courtyard area is the wing connecting the major east and west sections of the building (site plan map B). This wing features an arcade, with arches springing from Tuscan columns. Ceramic tiles are inset on the squared capitals. The arcade has a tile floor and a groin vaulted ceiling. Above the ceramic tile shed roof of the arcade is a clerestory area pierced with intermittently placed oculi.

A bell tower rises above the southwest corner of the courtyard.

At the east end of the north facade is a curved drive that leads to a porte-cochere, which in turn provides access to the chapel. The flat roof of the porte-cochere features carved wood beams supported by square, stuccoed piers. The piers and the ceiling of the porte-cochere are embellished with rectilinear bands of tile. The recessed entrance to the chapel is set behind a curvilinear arch decorated with an elaborate low relief stone carving featuring urns, foliage, and swags. The arched entrance is flanked by single wood doors.

A two-story wing is at the west end of the north facade. The primary business entrance is located here, in a central gabled projecting bay. A decorative arcaded relief follows the gable line. The double panel wood entrance doors contain twelve lights each and are enframed by fluted pilasters surmounted by foliate capitals. The lunette above the doorway is embellished with elaborate compound relief molding and a central figural depiction of inlaid mosaic tesserae.

A raised stuccoed band course separates the first from second stories. The rectangular relief panels are applied to the side bays of the second story. The relief carving of a seated winged woman takes its inspiration from the Graeco-Roman tradition.

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WEST FACADE

The north end of the west facade is covered with a gable roof, while a hip roof covers the remainder of this wing. Both the north and south ends of this facade project slightly. The central area of the first floor contains a series of arched openings which creates an arcade effect. The north four openings contain square, recessed windows. Multipaned windows fill the remaining two arched openings. French doors open onto a balcony on the second floor, north end. A tile, shed roof protects the balcony which is enclosed with a bracketed wrought-iron railing. Set in a curvilinear opening at the south end of the second floor is a double French door fronted with an iron railing.

SOUTH FACADE

A drive extends from The Paseo to Virginia Street, along the south side of the building. It passes through a porte cochere at the east end of the south facade that is similar in treatment to the porte cochere of the north facade. At the west end of the south facade is an entrance door, protected by a walled enclosure.

ROOF

A variety of roof shapes are used in this building: gable, hip, and shed. Red tile is used as the roofing material.

ALTERATIONS

The building is essentially unchanged since the addition of 1936.

PRESENT STATUS

The building is still used by the firm for which it was built.

CONDITION

The building is in good repair and the grounds are well maintained.

SITE

The building is located on a large plot at the southwest corner of Brush Creek Boulevard and The Paseo, a busy intersection. Commercial structures are located to the east, west, and north. A large surfaced parking area, used by D. W. Newcomer's Sons, is to the south.

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LANDSCAPING

The formal landscaping enhances the Italianate qualities of the building complex. The courtyard on the north facade, with its rectangular pool and wall fountain, reflects a typical European villa treatment. The prominent fountain on the east facade provides a focal point for the east entrance. The plantings, shrubbery, and trees help recreate the "garden" feeling of a country villa. Walkways around the building further add to the park-like quality of the landscape design.

FOOTNOTES

1. Western Contractor, 11 July 1925, p. 38.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1925 & 1936 Builder/Architect Edward B. Delk

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

D. W. Newcomer's Sons Funeral Home, founded by David W. Newcomer in 1893, is one of Kansas City's oldest business establishments. The building at 1331 Brush Creek Boulevard, was constructed for the company during two separate building phases in 1925 and 1936.<sup>1</sup> The Italian-influenced building was designed by the prominent Kansas City architect, Edward Buehler Delk. This building, with its landscaped, spacious residential treatment, was viewed during the time of its construction as an important departure from the usual style of "...staid, somber undertaking establishments".<sup>2</sup> It reflects a 20th century approach to undertaking as a modern business. The formal landscaping of the grounds was designed by the Kansas City firm of Hare and Hare, a nationally recognized landscape and city planning partnership.

### HISTORICAL DATA

The burial process has over the years evolved from a family/church oriented activity to an increasingly specialized business. This change affected both the responsibilities of the undertaker and the architectural design of the funeral home. In the late 19th century the undertaker's role centered around the home of the deceased, his church, and the cemetery. The undertaker's primary responsibility was in directing the funeral proceedings and preparing the body for burial. The preparation of the body usually took place in the deceased's home, while the funeral service was held in either the home or the church.<sup>3</sup> In the first quarter of the 20th century, the responsibilities of the undertaker were gradually expanded, and the funeral home had to be adapted to accommodate these changes.

In the late 19th century, the majority of funeral homes operated from private residences or commercial buildings which had been adapted to suit the needs of the undertaker.<sup>4</sup> The attendance at the average funeral had become too large for the ordinary living room and too small for a church, thus the funeral "parlor" (or chapel) was developed at the turn of the century to provide not only the devotional atmosphere of a church, but also the convenience and ambience of a private residence.<sup>5</sup> The parlors (chapels) were the first step in the eventual evolution of funeral establishments from adapted buildings to structures that were designed specifically for the care and deposition of the dead. By 1925 less than 10% of urban funeral homes advertised a funeral "chapel", but by 1950 they had become a standard feature.<sup>6</sup> Modern funeral homes also had to provide places for the preparation of the deceased for burial, for conducting the business of making the funeral arrangements (casket selection, etc.) and facilities to conduct the burial ceremony. These three functions were made as separate as possible. Adequate parking facilities was another requisite for the modern funeral establishment.<sup>8</sup>

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D. W. Newcomer's is an excellent example of a Kansas City firm that has followed this historical evolution. The firm was organized in 1893 by David W. Newcomer, and its first location was at 2202 East Ninth Street. In 1898 the firm moved to 2107-11 East Ninth Street, locating in a two story brick commercial building that was adapted to their needs. The firm remained at this location until moving to their present Brush Creek Boulevard location. When David W. Newcomer died in 1912, the company was incorporated as D. W. Newcomer's Sons and is operated today by members of the Newcomer family.<sup>9</sup>

The company became one of the most progressive burial firms in the midwest. It was the first in the city to have a chapel (located in the 2107-11 East Ninth Street building), introduced the display room for casket selection, and operated one of the first four motor hearses built in the country.<sup>10</sup> In constructing the facility on Brush Creek Boulevard in 1925, Newcomer's made the transition to a modern business, with the building and its later addition reflecting the modern concerns of the mortuary business. The irregular plan of the building provides separate entrances and spaces for all phases of the firm's concerns (a business entrance for making funeral arrangements, separate chapels areas, and separate entrances and areas for the delivery of bodies in preparation for services.) In addition, a large parking area is provided and the entire building is sited on spacious, landscaped, almost park-like grounds that provide a quiet atmosphere in a busy urban setting. The design of the building is reminiscent of a large, elegant residence, thus minimizing the business aspect of the burial process.

EDWARD B. DELK

Edward B. Delk graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1907. He went on to pursue graduate studies in architecture at the University of London, and from 1914-1918 he practiced architecture in Philadelphia. Following service in the First World War, Delk relocated in Kansas City at the urging of the J.C. Nichols Company. While working briefly as a consulting architect for the J. C. Nichols Company he drew the original plans for their famous shopping center, the Plaza. In 1922 he began a private practice that resulted in commissions throughout the southwest. Many of his designs, including the Plaza and D. W. Newcomer's have a strong Italian or Spanish flavor. Although Delk is noted principally for his residential designs, he also designed St. Andrew's Episcopal Church at Meyer and Wornall Road (1931), the Mill Creek Viaduct (1926), and Starlight Theater in Swope Park (1950). Delk died in 1956.<sup>11</sup>

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HARE AND HARE

The landscape architecture firm of Hare and Hare was founded by Sidney J. Hare. Hare was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and moved to Kansas City in 1868. From 1896-1903 he was Superintendent of Kansas City's Forest Hill Cemetery. In 1902 he opened an office as a landscape architect, and in 1910 his son, S. Herbert Hare became a partner in the firm. The firm's commissions extended to 27 states and included the landscaping plans for several J. C. Nichols Company subdivisions; park and boulevard plans for Joplin and Springfield, Missouri; and the landscaping of Greenwood Cemetery, Knoxville, Tennessee.<sup>12</sup>

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." D. W. Newcomer's Sons Funeral Home is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture", "Economics", and "Landscape Architecture".

FOOTNOTES

1. Western Contractor, 11 July 1925, p. 38; Building Permits No. 2325A and 49719, Public Works Department, 18th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
2. "Newcomers Into New Home Today", Kansas City Journal Post, 27 September 1925, sec. C, p. 1.
3. Robert Habenstein and William Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing, (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printer, Inc., 1962), pp. 563-64.
4. Ibid., p. 574.
5. Elmer Adams, "Planning The Funeral Home", Architectural Record 76 (July 1934): 40.
6. Habenstein and Lamers, History of American Funeral Directing, p. 570.
7. "Mortuary", Progressive Architecture 36 (October 1955): 96.
8. Adams, "Planning The Funeral Home", p. 40.
9. "Newcomers Into New Home Today", Kansas City Journal Post, 27 September 1925, sec. C, p. 1.
10. Ibid.
11. Sherry Piland, "Early Kansas City Architects: A Gifted Designer", Historic Kansas City News, Feb.-March, 1979, p. 5.

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12. Walter P. Tracy, Kansas City and Its One Hundred Foremost Men (Kansas City: W.P. Tracy, 1925), p. 115.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Adams, Elmer. "Planning the Funeral Home." Architectural Record 76 (July 1934): 40.

Building Permits No. 2325A and 49719, Public Works Department, 18th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2

Quadrangle name "Kansas City, Mo."

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

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

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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Verbal boundary description and justification SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  sec 28 49 33 beg SE Corn Brush Crk Blvd. & Virginia Ave Th E to W Li of Paseo Th S on W LI Paseo 365 ft then W at R/A to E LI of Virginia Ave Th N ALG SD & E LI to Beg

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title. Sherry Piland/Ellen Uguccione, Architectural Historians

©1982

organization Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Mo. date 9/29/82

street & number 26th Floor East, City Hall

telephone (816) 274-2555

city or town Kansas City

state Missouri

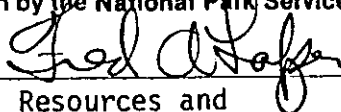
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Director, Department of Natural Resources and  
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 13, 1983

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Habenstein, Robert, and Lamers, William. The History of American Funeral Directing.  
Milwaukee: Bulfin Printer, Inc., 1962.

"Mortuary." Progressive Architecture 36 (October 1955): 96.

"Newcomers Into New Home Today." Kansas City Journal Post, 27 September 1925,  
sec. C, p. 1.

Piland, Sherry. "Early Kansas City Architects: A Gifted Designer." Historic Kansas  
City News, Feb.-March, 1979, p. 5.

Tracy, Walter P. Kansas City and Its One Hundred Foremost Men. Kansas City: W.P.  
Tracy, n.d.

Western Contractor, 11 July 1924, p. 38.

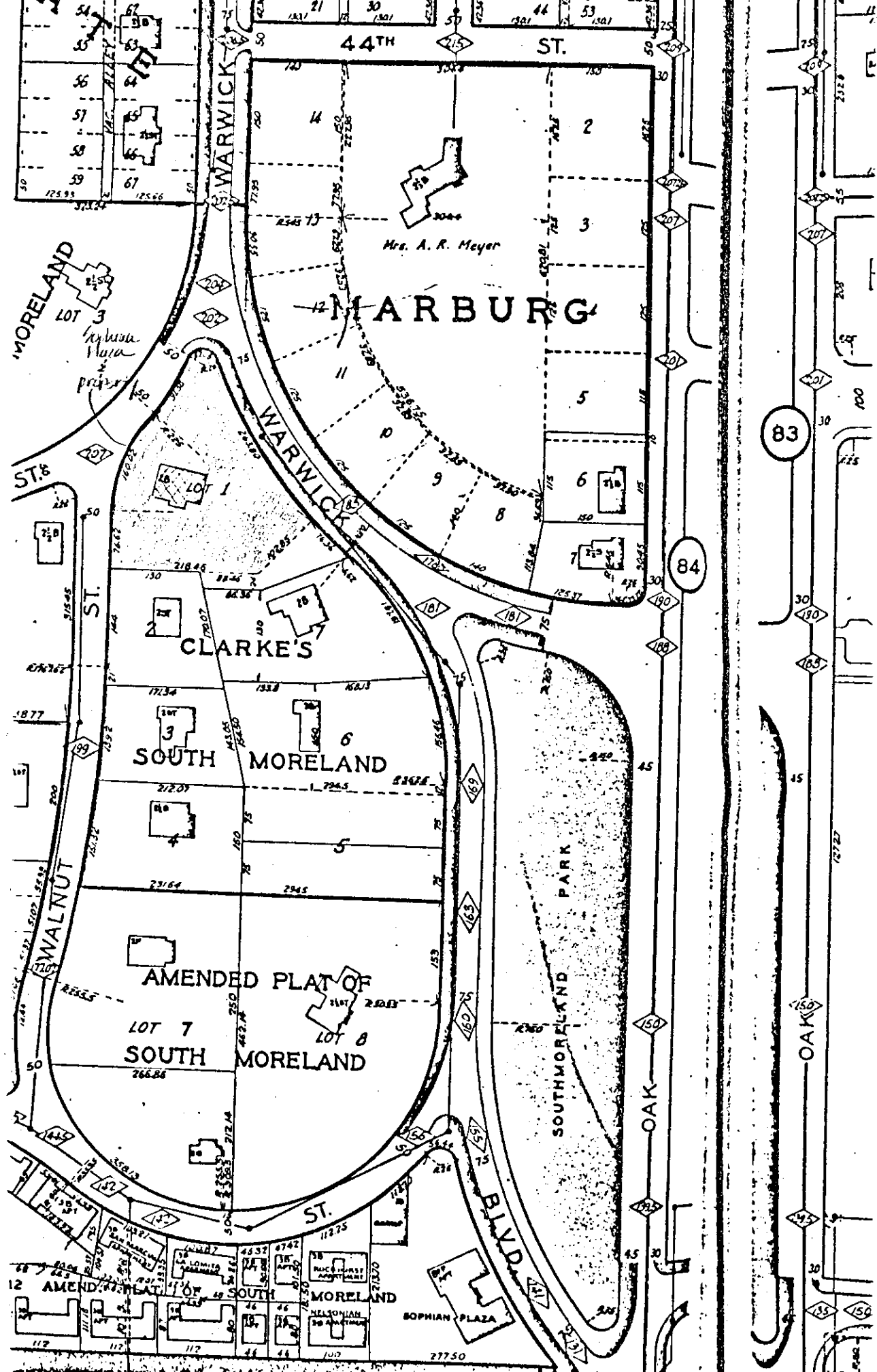
Item number 11

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2. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey and Registration  
Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks & Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City

December 22, 1982  
314/751-4096

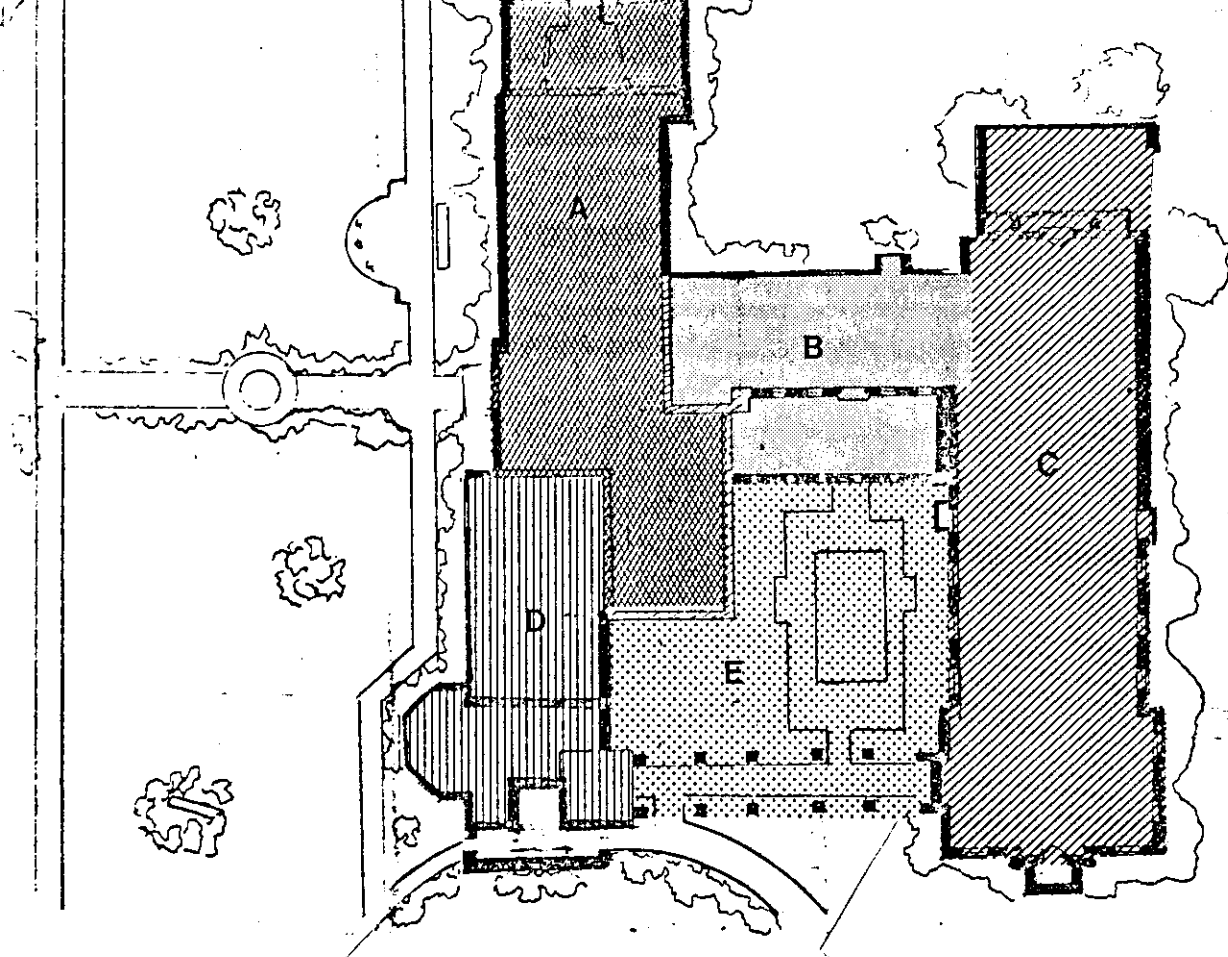
Missouri 65102



D.W. Newcomer's Sons Funeral Home  
1331 Brush Creek  
Kansas City, Missouri

SITE PLAN MAP

- A - Original 1925 portion of building
- B - East-west connecting wing (1936)
- C - Two story wing, running north-south along Virginia (1936)
- D - Northeast corner of complex (1936)
- E - Courtyard area



Scale: 1:24,000

**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **D.W. Newcomer's Sons Funeral Home**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Sherry Piland**

Date

Photographed: **Jan. 1982**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 11. N façade. Looking SW.

2 of 11. N façade, W end. Looking S.

3 of 11. View of courtyard, N façade. View looking S.

4 of 11. Detail, porte-cochere, N façade. Looking SW.

5 of 11. E façade on left, N façade on right. View looking SW.

6 of 11. N end of E façade. Looking NW.

7 of 11. S end of E façade. Looking NW.

8 of 11. Detail, doorway, E façade. Looking W.

9 of 11. W façade. Looking NE.

10 of 11. S façade. View looking E.

11 of 11. Photocopy from Selections From the Work of Edward Buehler Delk (New York: Architectural Catalogue Co., n.d.)





















