

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building

other names/site number Oberman and Company Building

**2. Location**

street & number 600 North Boonville Avenue [n/a] not for publication

city or town Springfield [n/a] vicinity

state MO code 077 county Greene code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 65802

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
[X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally  
[ ] statewide [X] locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ] )

 4 March 2002  
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

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  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
Property

**Category of Property**

**Number of Resources within**

Contributing

Noncontributing

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_ buildings  
\_\_\_\_\_ sites  
\_\_\_\_\_ structures  
\_\_\_\_\_ objects  
\_\_\_\_\_ 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 Function**

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION:

Manufacturing Facility

**Current Functions**

VACANT

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

OTHER: Factory

**Materials**

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other LIMESTONE

CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**

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

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri

**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**

INDUSTRY

**Periods of Significance**

1917-1949

**Significant Dates**

1917

1925

**Significant Person(s)**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Heckenlively, James Luther

**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

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: City of Springfield

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	474100	4118675			

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 Richard Lee Burton, President

organization Historic Springfield, Inc date January 18, 2002

street & number P.O. Box 50305 telephone 417-831-2627

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65805-0305

**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 Lafayette Investment Group, Inc. Attn: W. Craig Hosmer

street & number 300 South Jefferson Avenue, Suite 600 telephone 417-869-0581

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65806

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

**Summary:**

The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is a three-story brick industrial building with a rectangular plan. It is located at 600 Boonville Avenue, six blocks north of the Springfield Public Square at the northeast corner of the intersection of Boonville Avenue and Tampa Street (originally Pine Street) facing west. At this site, it is on the northern fringe of the current Jordan Valley Park development. The City of Springfield Government Plaza is situated two blocks north. The surrounding area is generally industrialized. The building is the only resource on the property and fully covers the southern half of the lot at a zero-setback from the sidewalk on the west at Boonville Avenue, on the south at Tampa Street and on the east at Robberson Avenue. The building is a large light-manufacturing industrial facility of solid red brick construction. It has a flat roof with a slight side south to side north downward slope. A low parapet wall with tile coping surrounds the roofline. A corbelled brick cornice at the flat parapeted roofline wraps around the primary west and side south elevations. All elevations have symmetrical fenestration. Its windows have been altered at least three times and currently present a variety of metal casement and aluminum windows. However, the original dimensions of all window openings are clearly evident. The building is currently vacant and many of the windows are boarded. It rests on a concrete foundation; and the west portion has a full basement. The building was constructed in what appears to have been three phases between 1917 and 1925. The original garment factory (the west portion of the current building) was constructed in 1917 on the eastern tier of Boonville. Subsequently, it appears that a small one-story brick addition was made to the rear east elevation. In 1925, a large brick addition was made adding two stories to the top of the previous one-story rear addition and continuing back east with three stories from the original factory to Robberson Avenue. The primary west and side south elevation of the original 1917 building have light-colored concrete lintels and projecting bull header bonded sills. The main entrance is Art Deco in style and has a limestone lintel with carved bracket supports tops the entrance and is inscribed with "D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co." The interior is of exposed post and beam construction, with all floors being fully open and having banks of windows along the side south and north walls. Overall, the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building retains substantial integrity. It is structurally sound and its original floor plan is largely intact. The most significant alteration throughout the building has been the in-fill of original window openings. In addition to having been implemented without aesthetic concerns, the window in-fill conflicts with the building's original design as a "daylight factory." However, the dimensions of the original openings, where in-filled, are still evident. Historic photographic evidence will facilitate the rehabilitation of the in-filled windows to enhance the building's overall character. Despite these alterations, it is one of the most intact light manufacturing industrial buildings still remaining in Springfield.

**Elaboration:**

The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is a three-story brick industrial building with a rectangular plan. It is located at 600 Boonville Avenue, six blocks west of the Springfield Public Square at the northeast corner of the intersection of Boonville Avenue and Tampa Street (originally Pine Street) facing west. At this site, it is on the northern fringe of the current Jordan Valley Park development and two blocks north of the Springfield Warehouse and Industrial National Register Historic District (Listed 6/25/99). The City of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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Springfield Government Plaza is situated two blocks north. The property is adjacent to an empty lot at the north. An empty lot is adjacent to it on the south across Tampa Street. The surrounding area is generally industrialized. The building is the only resource on the property and fully covers the southern half of the lot at a zero-setback from the sidewalk on the west at Boonville Avenue, on the south at Tampa Street and on the east at Robberson Avenue. The lot has a slight west to east upward grade. The northern half of the lot is a large paved parking area (*See Figure 1*).

The building is a large light-manufacturing industrial facility measuring 60 feet wide and 280 feet deep. Its walls are of solid red brick construction. It has a flat roof with a slight side south to side north downward slope. A low parapet wall with tile coping surrounds the roofline. Its windows have been altered at least three times and currently present a variety of metal casement and aluminum windows. However, the original dimensions of all window openings are clearly evident. The building is currently vacant and many of the windows are boarded. It rests on a concrete foundation; and the west portion has a full basement.

The building was constructed in what appears to have been three phases between 1917 and 1925. The original garment factory (the west portion of the current building) was constructed in 1917 on the eastern tier of Boonville and measured 60 feet wide and 150 feet deep. Subsequently, it appears that a small one-story brick addition was made to the rear east elevation. In 1925, a large brick addition was made adding two stories to the top of the previous one-story rear addition and continuing back east with three stories to extend 125 feet from the original factory to Robberson Avenue. Evidence suggests that the windows of the original 1917 factory may have been retrofitted with the metal casement windows used in the rear addition. However, additional interpretive research is necessary to determine if any exterior changes were made to the original 1917 building at the time of the 1925 addition. An historic photograph c. 1950 documents what is believed to have been the appearance of the building from 1925 through the end of the period of significance (*See Figure 2*).

The primary west elevation is constructed of red brick in a stretcher course bond (*See Photo 1*). It has a corbelled brick cornice at the flat parapeted roofline. The façade is symmetrically fenestrated and has three bays. The windows have light-colored concrete lintels and projecting bull header bonded sills. The three windows on each of the second and third stories have been replaced with small three-over-two metal casement windows surrounded by concrete block in-fill. The central first and second story windows have wide openings and previously had quadrupled windows framed in brick, with the top sashes having 2-over-2 panes and the bottom sashes having 3-over-3 panes. This bay was flanked on the south and north narrower openings with tripled windows of the same profile. The main entrance at the central bay on the first floor is Art Deco in style (*See Photo 2*). It currently has modern double metal doors with in-fill above to cover the full original opening, which had a large transom. The original double doors were wood with 3-over-3 panes on top of a single lower wood panel. The entrance is flanked on either side by narrow rectangular sidelights that now have a single glass pane. They previously had double-hung 3-over-3 windows. The door and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

sidelights assembly is surrounded by a stretcher bonded brick frame with limestone quoins. A limestone lintel with carved bracket supports tops the entrance and is inscribed with "D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co." A poured concrete staircase with low pier walls leads up to the main entrance. The main entrance is flanked on the south by a secondary entrance coupled with a window at the south, which is now boarded. This entrance has a modern metal and glass door, which replaces the original wood door consisting of a 3-over-3 window on top of a single lower wood panel, similar to the profile of that at the main entrance. The window at the south repeated the profile of those above. A modern aluminum awning covers now covers the opening of the side entrance. A poured concrete staircase with an iron pipe railing rises to the secondary entrance ascending south to north. The main entrance is flanked on the north by a coupled window, repeating the profile of those above. The openings on either side of the main entrance have light-colored concrete lintels and projecting bull header bonded sills. Centered beneath these at basement level are coupled window openings that have been in-filled with concrete block. These originally had windows repeating the profile of those above.

The side south elevation has two clearly defined faces reflecting the 1925 rear east addition to the original west 1917 garment factory. Because of the building's location at the northeast corner of Boonville and Tampa (formerly Pine), the south elevation of the original garment factory was highly visible and, therefore, treated with the same details as the primary west elevation. It is constructed of the same red brick in a stretcher course bond. The corbelled brick cornice at the flat parapeted roofline continues from the front. The south has seven bays of symmetrically fenestrated tripled windows (*See Photo 3*). These have light-colored concrete sills and projecting bull header bonded brick sills. The first bay of the third story has a fire escape door with the original metal fire escape attached. The sixth bay of the first floor has a freight door. It is an original door opening. Most of the windows have been in-filled with concrete blocks. However, the original dimensions of the openings are still evident. The original tripled windows repeated the profile from the primary west elevation. The windows on the first story that remain open have been altered (*See Photo 4*). Single windows at the basement level are centered below those of the upper floors. They have mostly been in-filled with concrete block. The south elevation of the 1925 addition is constructed of a lighter-colored brick in a stretcher course bond (*See Photo 5*). It was built on top of the earlier on-story brick addition two stories and then extends east. The previous one-story addition was constructed of the same darker brick and stretcher course bond as that of the original factory building. The corbelled brick cornice extends from the original factory building to connect the two faces at the roofline. The low flat parapet wall at the roofline of the rear east wall of the original building is still evident. The rear addition has 22 bays of single factory-type metal casement windows with no lintel treatment, but with projecting bull header bonded brick sills. The first bay of the third story of the 1925 addition has a fire escape door and an attached fire escape that appears to date to the construction of the addition. The first and second bays of the first story (which would have been part of the early one-story addition) are occupied by a wide service door. It is believed to be an original door opening and to have had an overhanging shed roof. Another single door is at the thirteenth bay of the first story and is also believed to be an original opening. The three doors in the addition door openings are not believed to be original materials. The windows on the third story are still

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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open. Those of those on the second and third stories have been mostly in-filled with plywood or concrete block.

The rear east elevation is constructed of common course bond, with the third and second stories being laid in a repeating six-course bond and the first story in a repeating 12-course bond. It has five bays of single factory-type metal casement windows, with no lintels but projecting brick sills. The windows on the second story are boarded. A modern garage-type metal overhead door at the center of the first story appears to replace original windows at the third and fourth bay. A tall brick freight elevator tower at the northeast corner also had a water tank at its top that supported the original fire sprinkler system. The tower has a low pitched hip roof (*See Photo 6*).

The side north elevation is less detailed than that on the side south (*See Photos 7 and 8*). A one-story commercial building previously occupied the lot adjacent at the north of the subject property. Only a small alleyway separated the two buildings. Therefore, the side north elevation of the subject property would have been partially obscured from the street and would have warranted less design detail. This adjacent building has been demolished and replaced with a large paved parking lot. The 1925 rear east addition has 20 bays on the north, with the elevator tower at the northeast corner replacing the additional two bays present on the side south elevation. The windows have the same profile as those opposite on the south. A metal fire escape door with attached fire escape is at the first bay of the third floor. Almost all the windows on the second and first story have been boarded. There is evidence of a small one-story gable-roofed attached shed being present at the east side of the south elevation. However, the dates of its construction and removal are not known. The south elevation of the original 1917 factory building has 12 bays with single windows with segmental arches of three-course bull header bonded brick. The original windows have been replaced with modern aluminum windows. The windows at the first story have been boarded. The area between the second and third bays is occupied by the original freight elevator tower. A fire escape (probably not original) is attached at the third bay (*See Photo 9*). There is evidence of a covered staircase from the front west of the building to the tenth bay of the second story. There may have been a staircase here originally.

The original floor plans of both the west 1917 original factory building and the east 1925 addition are unchanged. The interior of the building is of exposed post and beam construction, with all floors being fully open and having banks of windows along the side south and north walls. The rear east wall of the original factory building remains and is the only break in the large interior open spaces. The walls are all exposed brick. Unfortunately, the interior of the building was sandblasted by a previous owner to remove paint. The current plan for rehabilitation will work to address any detrimental impact of this insensitive treatment on the brick surfaces and mortar joints. The ceilings are exposed wood joists and cross struts. The ceiling of the third floor reveals the slight downward south to north slope of the flat roof. All the floors of the original factory building are wood, with the exception of the basement which has a concrete floor. The first floor of the addition has a concrete floor. Those of the second and third

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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floors are wood (*See Photos 10-12*).

The main entrance of the building leads opens to a staircase to the basement level. Staircases at either side of the main entrance leading up to the south and north to the first floor have been enclosed (*See Photos 13 and 14*). An enclosed interior staircase leading from the basement to the third floor is located adjacent to the east of the freight elevation in the north east corner of the original 1917 factory building. Another freight elevator is found at the northeast corner of the 1925 addition (*See Photos 15 and 16*).

Overall, the subject property retains substantial integrity of design, materials, construction, location and associations. It is structurally sound and its original floor plan is largely intact. The most significant alteration throughout the building has been the in-fill of original window openings. In addition to having been implemented without aesthetic concerns, the window in-fill conflicts with the building's original design as a "daylight factory." However, the dimensions of the original openings, where in-filled, are still evident. Historic photographic evidence will facilitate the rehabilitation of the in-filled windows to enhance the building's overall character. Despite these alterations, it is one of the most intact light manufacturing industrial buildings still remaining in Springfield.

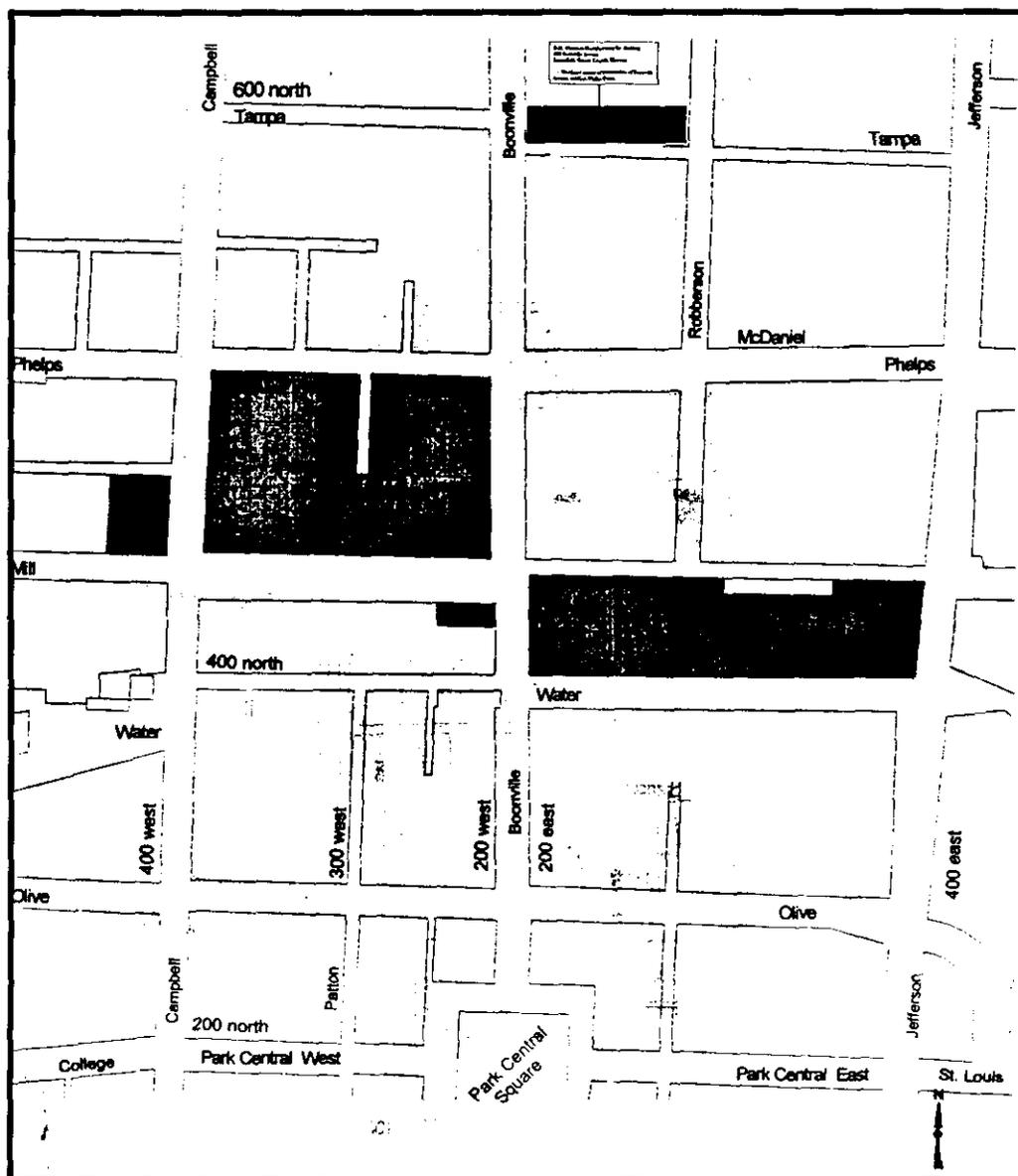
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 6

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

**Figure 1: Location Map.** D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building in relation to Springfield's Public Square and the Springfield Warehouse and Industrial National Register Historic District, listed on June 25, 1999 (Map adapted from Springfield Historic Register, City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development, March 2000).



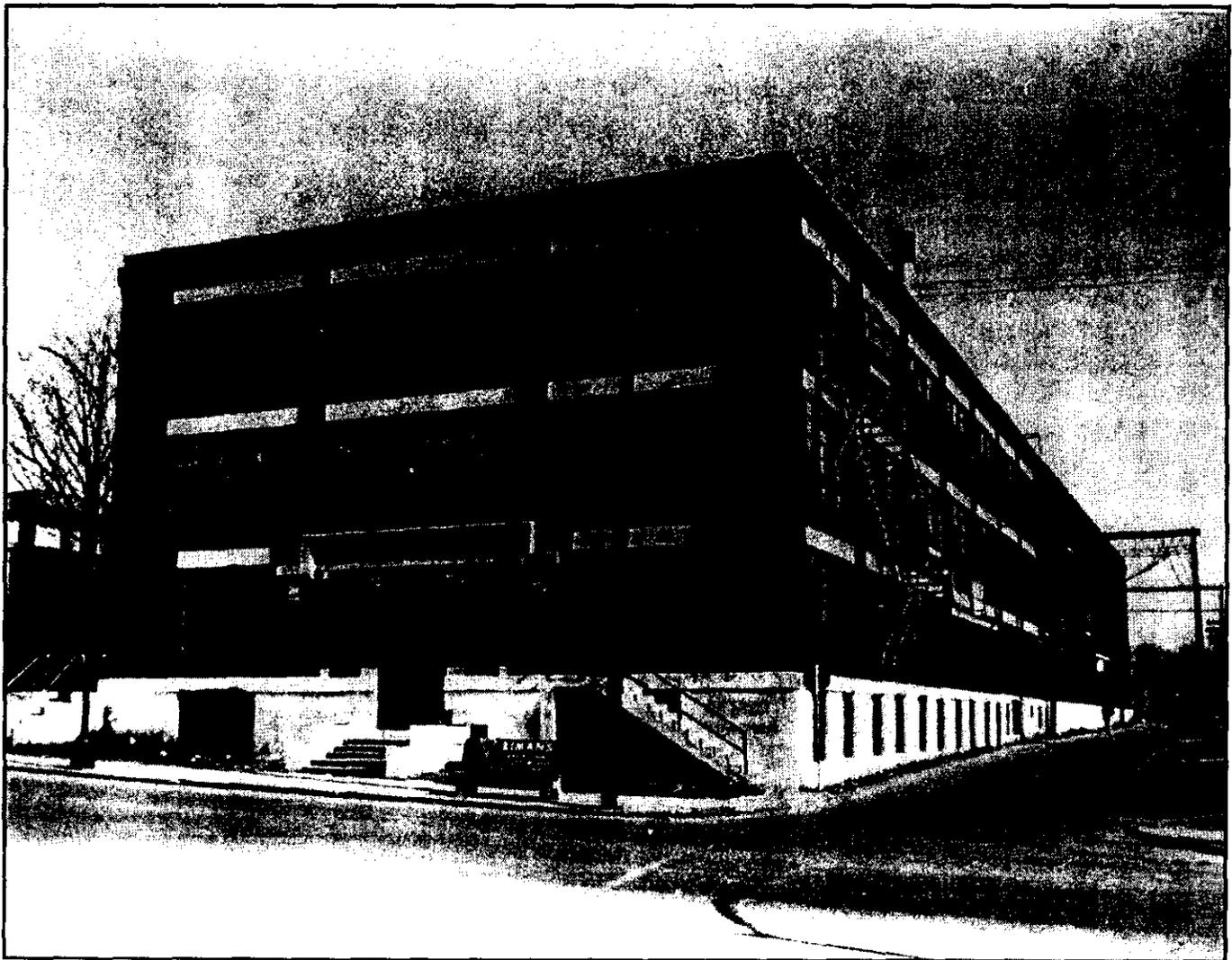
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 7

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

**Figure 2: Historic Photograph.** D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building. Primary west elevation from southwest view (Photo: c. 1950. History Museum For Springfield-Greene County. Used with permission.)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 8

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

**Summary:**

The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building at 600 Boonville Avenue is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of INDUSTRY. It is located six blocks north of the Springfield Public Square and two blocks north of the Springfield Warehouse and Industrial National Register Historic District (Listed 6/25/99). Constructed in 1917, the building housed the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co., which grew to become one of the largest manufacturers of boys' and men's pants in the country and, during World War II, as a major provider of military uniform pants. The original street of the building was 700 Boonville Avenue. At this site, it stood on the main trolley line of the Springfield Traction Company, providing its workers easy access to mass transportation. In the area of INDUSTRY, it is significant for its role in the industrial history of Springfield and its economic development during the pre- to post-World War II period. It has a strong association with the unionization of the Springfield garment industry and the founding of the United Garment Workers Union, Local 216, chartered in November 1935. It also was a major catalyst for the integration of women into Springfield's industrial work force. The building is a compelling example of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century light-manufacturing industrial architecture; and, it is the only known extant industrial building in Springfield designed by regionally important architect James Luther Heckenlively. It is particularly noteworthy for its implementation of fireproof and "daylight factory" design, which were innovations for the period. The period of significance is determined as 1917 - 1949, beginning with the date of construction and ending at the time that the Oberman company discontinued operations at the site.

**Background:**

Springfield, located in Greene County in the southwest region of Missouri, was settled in the late 1820's and early 1830's, primarily by Anglo-American families from Tennessee. In 1829, John Polk Campbell, of Maury County, Tennessee, designated the future site of Springfield in an area just southwest of the Jordan Creek Valley (initially referenced as a branch of Wilson's Creek). A natural spring here and the area's location between the watersheds of the Missouri and White Rivers made it ideal for settlement and a focal point for growth in the region. Three Fulbright brothers (William, John, and Levi) arrived with their families early in 1830 and were quickly followed by other settlers.

Greene County was organized in 1833 and was originally composed of the entire southwest corner of the state. It was named to honor Nathanael Greene, a Revolutionary War hero. In 1835, the U.S. Government opened a land office in Springfield, the only one in the region. That same year, John Polk Campbell donated a land tract of 50 acres to Greene County, cementing Springfield's position as the county seat. The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is located directly north of the Original Plat of the Town of Springfield one block north of Phelps Street (the northern boundary of the Original Plat). The land east of the Oberman Building was part of the J.P. Campbell Reserve, a land tract Mr. Campbell retained from his original patent.

The Town of Springfield was incorporated in 1838 and grew moderately during the period prior to the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 9

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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Civil War. Springfield struggled to rebuild during the early post-war years, but received a major boost with the arrival of the railroad. The first train of the Atlantic-Pacific Railway (which became the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway or "Frisco") came in April 1870 and ushered in the same transportation revolution that created a boom throughout the country. The Town of North Springfield was established by the Ozark Land Company to support development of the railroad north of Springfield's Public Square and to capitalize on the business and real estate opportunities it created. The commercial area of North Springfield that developed along the railroad is reflected in the Commercial Street Historic District (National Register listed 5/24/83). The neighborhood south of Commercial Street that arose to meet the housing needs of North Springfield residents is reflected in the Mid-town Historic District (National Register listed 7/13/89). The Town of Springfield and Town of North Springfield merged in 1887.

In the decade between 1880 and 1890, the population of Springfield more than tripled to 21,850, driven in part by the merger with North Springfield, but more significantly by intense settlement. Springfield's central geographic location, thriving industries and railroad connections made it a major trade and distribution hub and created significant economic opportunities for new residents. It was at this time that Springfield became known as "Queen City of the Ozarks." In response to this burgeoning economy, Springfield's commercial interests began to expand in all directions from the Public Square. Increasingly, two- and three-story brick commercial buildings in the Late Victorian style replaced earlier wood frame domestic and commercial buildings around the Public Square perimeter. The commercial expansion south and east of Springfield's Public Square is reflected in the Campbell Avenue, South Avenue and West Walnut Commercial Historic Districts (all National Register listed 6/25/99).<sup>1</sup>

The pressure of commercial development from the Public Square also led to outward residential expansion. With their increasing prosperity, the upper-middle and upper classes of Springfield built large and high-style Queen Anne, Italianate and, later, Colonial Revival homes along St. Louis Street and East Walnut Street to the east and South Avenue to the South. The residential development of Springfield's wealthier population is reflected in the Walnut Street Historic District (National Register listed 3/21/85). The residential expansion for Springfield's lower and modest income population occurred to the west of the Public Square in the area that originated as the Fulbright farm and other earlier agricultural tracts and is known today as the West Central neighborhood. These areas of commercial and residential expansion were connected and fostered by the establishment of Springfield's trolley line. The first successful effort to put Springfield mass transportation on rail was The Springfield Railway Company, organized by H.F. Fellows, Robert McElhancy and James Stoughton. Its first car was pulled by two horses and made its initial trip on April 15, 1881. A turntable was constructed in the center of the Public Square, so that the trolley cars could reverse for their return trips. The car barn, stable and office were located on Boonville Avenue at Division Street, a few blocks south of Commercial Street. The company merged with People's Railway Company (also established in 1881) in 1886 to form Citizen's Street Railway Company. The Citizen's ran north and south down Boonville connecting Commercial Street in North Springfield and the Springfield Public Square.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 10

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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Several small trolley companies were organized between 1889 and 1891. One of these, the Walnut Street Railway established in 1889, was operated from 1890 to 1893 as a horse car line. It ran from Springfield's eastern boundary at Springfield (now National) Avenue west on Walnut Street, through downtown to the West Central neighborhood and ending at Fort Avenue. Another, the Woodland Heights Rapid Transit Company, ran through the residential neighborhood north of Commercial Street. These smaller companies were all taken over by Citizen's. In 1889, Citizen's had begun its conversion to electrical streetcars and was reorganized as the Metropolitan Electric Railway Company. The first electrical streetcar made its inaugural trip on December 4, 1890. Metropolitan soon fell into receivership due to financial losses and was purchased in 1895 by Springfield Traction Company (which in future years became part of Springfield Railway and Light Company, ancestor of Springfield's present City Utilities Company). The last electrical streetcar ran on August 29, 1937, yielding to the progress of automotive mass transportation.<sup>2,3</sup>

**Criterion A: INDUSTRY**

The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is significant for its role in the industrial history of Springfield and its economic development during the pre- to post-World War II period. The building is a compelling example of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century light-manufacturing industrial architecture; and, it is the only known extant industrial building in Springfield designed by regionally important architect James L. Heckenlively. It is particularly noteworthy for its implementation of fireproof and "daylight factory" design, which were innovations for the period.

**The Rise of Industrialization**

The pioneer settlement of the Town of Springfield in the 1830's provided significant business opportunity for trained and skilled craftsmen who came to the area. These craftsmen were the genesis of industrial development within the community. Largely, they offered manufacture and repair services that met the immediate survival needs of the increasing number of settlers. One of the earliest examples of these "primitive" industrial beginnings was the need for firearms. In 1845, Jake Painter, son of Samuel Painter who came to Springfield in 1831, bought a lot northwest of the Public Square and opened a gunsmith shop. Best known for a pistol he manufactured called "Jake's Best," Painter repaired and supplied firearms to Springfield residents, as well as those passing through to the California Gold Mines in 1849-1851. His was one of Springfield's successful businesses at this time. The need for clothing presented skilled tailors great opportunity. J.C. "Chap" Bigbee was renowned for his craftsmanship and established a very successful tailored suit business. Wilson Hackney worked in the same shop as Mr. Bigbee and manufactured hats. Other "craftsman" industries that thrived during this early period of Springfield development were wool-carding, blacksmithing, tanning, shoemaking and harness-making. These were all secondary industries derived from or providing support to Springfield's primary livestock- and agricultural- based economy. Two early businesses that emerged on Boonville were a horse-powered wool-carding machine operated by A.M. Julian on the east side near the Jordan Creek and a tanning yard nearby on the west.<sup>4</sup>

The early pioneers found abundant game and fish around the new Springfield settlement, as well as berries,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 11

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

nuts, wild fruits and honey. Farming provided supplies of poultry, livestock and produce to feed the growing population. The flour milling industry was established out of the need for access to bread, a major staple of the pioneer diet. The first gristmill in southwestern Missouri is reported to have been established on the James River eight miles south of Springfield in 1821. William Fulbright started another mill in 1832 near the head of the Little Sac River, close to where Fulbright Springs and the Fulbright Water Treatment Facility are today. Numerous horse- and water-powered mills soon went into operation, including the Julian Mill in Springfield. The O.K. Flouring Mill was started in the mid-1850's by Allen Mitchell and John Caynor on West Mill Street adjacent to the Jordan Creek north of the Public Square.

The increasing need for housing, combined with the capabilities of water-powered production, drove the rise and expansion of sawmill and planing mill operations during the pre-Civil War era. As settlers transitioned from the early crude round log cabins with dirt floors to more substantial square log houses with puncheon floors, sawmills and planing mills became important sources of building materials and employment. Along with the establishment of brick yards and lime kilns, the mills and lumber yards rose to significance during the period following the Civil War when new construction responded to a "boom" in commercial and residential demand. One of the dominant businesses in Springfield in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Springfield Planing Mill, Lumber and Construction, grew out of a small planing mill started and owned by Davy C. See at this time.

During the decade between 1850 and 1860, commercial and industrial activity expanded; but, it maintained the character of small owner-craftsman shops that developed on and around the Public Square. Saddlers and harness-makers, tailors and milliners, shoemakers and blacksmiths sprung up along College and St. Louis Streets and north on Olive and along Boonville. During this time the main north-south corridor through the Public Square expanded north on Boonville to Center Street and south on South to Mt. Vernon Street. The first foundry was opened by Martin Ingram in 1858 at the corner of St. Louis and Jefferson (where the Woodruff Building is today). W.H. Worrell opened a confectionery store on the northwest corner of the Public Square (where the second Greene County Courthouse later stood before being demolished in 1914 to make way for The Greater Heer Store). Also that year, Hancock Haden & Company established a small tobacco operation on Main Street. The furniture industry grew out of the ready supply of milled lumber. Charles Gottfried opened a furniture shop on Boonville, which later became the highly successful Gottfried Furniture and Carpet Company. During this period, the population of Springfield continued to climb. However, at still less than a thousand people, it still had not reached a point of sustaining a major industrial factory operation.

The years immediately preceding the Civil War brought great prosperity and commerce. As household fortunes rose, in part due to a strong crop harvest in 1861, the demand for manufactured goods also increased. Large dry goods and grocery businesses were established to supply it. These included a dry goods store opened in 1862 on the west side of the Public Square by J.T. Keet and William Massey (subsequently associated with Newton Rountree and later known as the Keet-Rountree Dry Goods

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

Company). G.D. Milligan started a grocery business at the same time on the east side of the Public Square, which was the start of the wholesale trade in Springfield. W.J. McDaniel came to Springfield in 1862, initially to operate in the tinning business. He soon started a small bank on the southeast corner of the Public Square that soon became a cornerstone of Springfield commerce and industry.

The progress in Springfield's growth was halted temporarily during the Civil War as the town came under military occupation, changing hands several times between Federal and Confederate troops. One major impact of the war was the delay in plans for construction of the southwest branch of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad through Springfield. The approval of a land grant in 1852 to accommodate the transcontinental railroad line generated significant anticipation for economic opportunity in Springfield, which contributed greatly to increased population, land appreciation and commercial expansion in the pre-War years. Following the War and upon arrival of the first train in April 1870, the expectations that the railroad would have on Springfield development began to be realized. Providing access to new markets for locally grown and produced products, the "Frisco" railroad had a phenomenal impact on the expansion of Springfield's agricultural-based economy. And, by locating the repair and maintenance shop for its entire line in North Springfield, the "Frisco" created new jobs to attract and sustain a growing working class population. The "Frisco" soon became Springfield's largest employer.

Farming in the region expanded to exploit the new markets now accessible through the railroad. Production of fruits, livestock, poultry, dairy products, grain and produce all rose dramatically for export. Supplies of cotton, wool and tobacco were also increased both for export and local manufacturing. The Springfield Cotton Mills and Springfield Woolen Mills, both in operation in 1872, produced fabric large quantities of fabric. Established in 1879, the Queen City Mill became a major producer and shipper of flour. The Old Coon Tobacco Works was a prominent manufacturer of cigars, plug, twist and smoking tobaccos. Farming-related industries, such as the Springfield Wagon Works and H.O. Dow & Co. (a manufacturer of agricultural implements) also became significant producers and employers. By 1881, Springfield's jobbing trade was estimated at \$2,500,000, with shipments throughout southwest Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and the Indian Territory.

Another boost to the industrial development came in 1881, when the Kansas, Fort Scott and Memphis Railway extension from Kansas City into Springfield was completed. This new railway expanded Springfield's direct communication and trade with major national markets, such as Chicago and Memphis. It also provided competition to the "Frisco" which forced it to reduce its shipping rates. Lower transportation costs had a significant impact on growth of Springfield's wholesale and manufacturing concerns.

*A Favorable Industrial Climate*

By the 1890's, warehouse and industrial development began to shift south from Commercial Street into the Jordan Creek Valley along Phelps, Mill and Water Streets. This shift was caused by the completion of a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 13

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

branch line of the "Frisco" Railway and Kansas, Fort Scott and Memphis Railroad into the area. New construction followed, joining several warehouse and industrial concerns already established in the area. The Headley Grocery Company constructed a new building on Water Street to house its tobacco and cigar manufacturing operations (the building later became home to the G.D. Milligan Company, a prominent grocery wholesaler). The Springfield Ice & Refrigerating Company, established by Adolphous Busch, was built on the southern tier of Phelps Street and soon expanded south on to Mill. It provided ice and cold storage in support of Springfield's vital brewing business, as well as other produce and meat-packing industries. These warehouse and industrial businesses all prospered with the benefits of accessible rail shipping for their products, but they also benefited from proximity to Springfield's trolley which provided mass transportation for their employees. The Citizen's Street Railway Co., formed by the merger of the Springfield Railway and People's Railway in 1886, had a main line along Boonville that connected the Public Square and Commercial Street, as well as the surrounding residential areas. The area along Phelps, Mill and Water Streets and bisected by Boonville soon became the epicenter of Springfield industrial development. Its significance is reflected in the Springfield Warehouse and Industrial Historic District (NR listed 6/25/99).

Population continued to rise in Springfield over the next 20 years – from an estimated 21, 850 in 1890, to 23,267 in 1900, to 35,201 in 1910. Established industries, such as Springfield Wagon Works, continued to prosper and new businesses emerged. In 1910, the Springfield Jobbers' and Manufacturer's Association was organized to promote cooperation among commercial and industrials interests. A key focus of this organization of leading companies was to advocate improved freight rates and railroad services. The Springfield Club (forerunner of today's Chamber of Commerce) reported in 1911 that Springfield had 600 retail stores with an invested capital of \$5,000,000 and 200 jobbing concerns with \$2,000,000. Total sales were projected at \$30,000,000 annually. The town's 15 banks had a capital and surplus of \$2,000,000, with total deposits of \$8,000,000. The rise in industrial development was the principal contributor to Springfield's expanding economy. In the preceding five years, Springfield had experienced a 45% increase in capital investment into its industrial base. Such was the climate favorable to industry in the years prior to World War I that attracted the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. to Springfield.

*The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co.*

The plan for the location of a new garment factory in Springfield was announced by representatives of the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. on Sunday, January 14, 1917. The announcement followed acquisition of the lot at the corner of Boonville and Pine Street (now Tampa Street) from Drury College. The lot was 70 feet wide and 300 feet deep and located just north of the railway branch at Mill Street. The initial investment for construction of the new factory was reported as \$100,000. The new facility, designed by local architect James L. Heckenlively, was to be fully modern and to accommodate daily production of 7,200 pairs of pants and overalls, employing 800 people at capacity. From the outset, expansion of the plant was anticipated based on demand and the availability of skilled or trained labor to meet capacity requirements.<sup>5</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 14

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

A key factor in the location of the new D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. factory to Springfield was the Merchants' and Jobbers' Association, the descendant of the Springfield Jobbers' and Manufacturer's Association organized in 1910. The organization had formed a special negotiating committee to promote Springfield and encourage its selection as the site of the new Oberman factory. The committee was a "Who's Who" of influential Springfield businessmen and power brokers, including Arch McGregor, E.A. Barbour, M. C. Baker, E.N. Ferguson, J.A. Tolerton, H.B. McDaniel, John Landers and G.M. Sebree. By and large, these individuals were officers, directors and attorneys of Springfield's several banks and trust companies. In this regard, the industrial "recruiting" of the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. to Springfield is an early example of the economic model that continues in communities today.<sup>6</sup>

Another interesting factor in the establishment of the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. in Springfield is that an "experimental" factory was established and operating prior to the acquisition of the Boonville site. Little is known of this operation to-date. However, it was managed by J.L. Burnet and was reported to have 140 employees, about 18% the size of the planned new factory. For the period, this operation was itself a fairly large one. Mr. Burnet worked closely with James L. Heckenlively as the local Oberman representative on the early development of plans for the new factory.

While plans for the new Oberman factory were not fully completed, excavation began immediately following the announcement of the site acquisition in January 1917. Construction must have progressed quickly, as the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. was listed for operations in the 1917 Springfield City Directory as located at 700 Boonville (now 600 Boonville). Jacob (Jake) Kranzberg was the manager and C.E. Hunter the Assistant Manager. Theodore Oberman was a clerk at the time, residing at 607 St. Louis Street. Although a clerk, the younger Mr. Oberman was well situated on St. Louis Street, the upper class residential neighborhood of the time.<sup>7</sup>

The Oberman factory soon met and exceeded its early expectations of success in Springfield. With a supply of locally produced fabric, access to national markets through the "Frisco" railway, a growing labor pool and availability of mass transportation for its employees on the electric trolley at its doorstep on Boonville, the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. had very favorable conditions for growth and expansion (*See Figure 1*). In 1925, a large three-story brick addition was added to the rear east side of the original factory building, extending the operations all the way to Robberson Avenue. The 125-foot long addition was completed in August 1925 at a reported cost of \$100,000. With the addition, employment within the factory was estimated at 600, with 90% being young women. Jake Kranzberg, still managing the operation, touted the Oberman factory as one of the country's largest manufacturers of boys' and men's pants. By 1927, the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. was the second largest employer in Springfield, second only to the "Frisco" Railway. With close to 1,000 employees, D.M. Oberman was the largest single pants factory in the United States. It would continue to play a significant role in Springfield's industrial development throughout the remaining years of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 15

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

In the 1930's and 1940's, the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. (by 1937 renamed Oberman and Company) continued to expand and produce at capacity. By 1935, Oberman had opened a new warehouse facility across Tampa Street on the southeast corner of the intersection of Boonville and Tampa (then 646 Boonville). The warehouse later moved to the west side of Boonville. The company opened an additional facility in 1936 at 620 West Chase Street, north of the "Frisco" Railway adjacent to Commercial Street. The Oberman factory boomed during World War II with Army contracts to supply American troops with uniform pants. In 1945, Oberman and its two principal competitors, E.S. Laurie and Springfield Garment, had contracts representing total orders of 720,000 pairs of pants. However, the fortunes of Oberman and Company appear to have changed quickly in the period immediately following the war. The Oberman and Company factory closed in 1949 and stood vacant in 1950.<sup>8</sup>

**James L. Heckenlively** (1863-1938)

The D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is the only known industrial building in Springfield associated with James L. Heckenlively, a prominent and prolific local architect active in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The works of several architects survive from this period of growth and "boom" construction, including those of Arch N. Torbitt, William E. Foley, William H. Hackney, George F. Reed and Carl G. Mark (The latter two were partners with Mr. Heckenlively at different periods of his career).<sup>9</sup> However, James L. Heckenlively stands alone with regard to the breadth of his designs across a wide range of institutional, church, public, educational and residential buildings. Among his works are the Abou Ben Adhem Shrine Mosque (NR listed 9/9/82), Grace Methodist Church, St. Paul's Methodist Church, First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, Carnegie Public Library, Campbell Public School, Bailey Public School, Central High School Fine Arts and Industrial Arts Buildings (demolished 2000), the Ralph Harrison Football Stadium and the English Cottage Revival Style domestic dwelling at 1230 East Walnut Street (Walnut Street Historic District, Building No. 95, NR listed 3/21/85).

James Luther Heckenlively was born on August 18, 1863, in Gentry County, Missouri. He was the son of Jacob and Martha J. (Shisler) Heckenlively and one of eight children. Mr. Heckenlively was named for his paternal grandfather James Heckenlively (1799-1856), a Lutheran minister who immigrated from Germany to Ohio during his early years of marriage. The family name was originally spelled Heckenlaible. Jacob Heckenlively was born in 1838 in Crawford County, Ohio, and later settled in Missouri to farm. James went to school in Gentry County and later taught there. Subsequently, he attended the Normal School in Stanberry, Missouri. Upon graduation there, he began work as an apprentice in the office of a Stanberry architect. Mr. Heckenlively soon moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1893, where he continued his training as an architect.<sup>10</sup>

In 1894, James L. Heckenlively arrived in Springfield as a superintendent of construction projects for a Maryville company. Later that year, he became associated with George F. Reed and the two formed a partnership, Reed & Heckenlively, with offices at 126½ Southside Public Square. The two architects collaborated for close to 20 years; but in 1913 they established separate practices. Following the break-up of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 16

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

Reed & Heckenlively, Mr. Heckenlively traveled to Europe to continue his architectural studies and returned with many new ideas for his work in Springfield. By 1917, he opened an office in the Landers Building (502-506) on the northwest corner of the Public Square. It was at this time that he designed the plans for the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building to be built at 700 Boonville (now 600 Boonville).

Mr. Heckenlively enlisted in the army while in Washington when the United States entered World War I. He served as captain in the quartermaster corps of the construction division, captain of engineers, major of engineers and major of auxiliary. His service ended abruptly when he was wounded in Washington by an anarchist. Returning to Springfield in 1918, Mr. Heckenlively became reacquainted with Carl G. Mark, who had worked as an architect with the earlier Reed and Heckenlively firm. The two formed Heckenlively & Mark, which over the next 20 years became Springfield's most prominent architectural firm with offices in the Landers Building. In 1938, Heckenlively & Mark became involved in numerous WPA projects that, with other significant local projects, created a significant workload for them. Mr. Heckenlively, then 75, fell ill on January 10 and became bedridden. Mr. Mark worked night and day to keep the firm's projects on schedule. On February 22, he died of a heart attack at this drawing board in the Landers Building offices. James L. Heckenlively died six months later on August 28, 1938, at his home at 601 East Cherry Street. Funeral services were held at Christ Episcopal Church (NR listed 3/26/87) by Dr. Sears F. Riepma. He is buried in Springfield National Cemetery (NR listed 8/27/99).<sup>11</sup>

*The Daylight Factory*

The new D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. building, designed by James L. Heckenlively in 1917, was to be in an innovative "daylight factory" plan. The tall four-story building (including the basement) consisted of large, open sewing rooms. Windows were placed to practically cover the walls on all four elevations, maximizing the natural source of light. In addition to the functional accommodations for light, great consideration was given to fire safety. The latest in fireproof materials were used in its construction; and, numerous interior stairways and outside fire escapes were installed to "prevent any danger to the employee in cases of panic."

The new Oberman operation was intended to be "the last word in factories," both in accommodations for employee comfort and the latest equipment technologies to maximize plant capacity. Plans for the original building included rest rooms, reading rooms, shower baths and "any equipment that will tend to make the work of the employee more pleasant and agreeable." A cafeteria, Calvert's Cafeteria, was operated in the basement of the building and had a lunch counter to provide inexpensive meals for the employees. The cafeteria was managed by Harold Calvert, a manager of Oberman's Chase Street facility in North Springfield. Machinery installed was to have the most modern safety features and to be of the latest models. The factory had its own power and lighting plant.

Mr. Heckenlively's design for the Oberman "daylight factory" was certainly an innovation – and a well-touted one – for Springfield. The specific influences for his work are not known. However, the timing of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 17

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

the project coincides with his return from his travels abroad studying architecture. It is possible that he brought back to Springfield many new ideas for industrial design. However, the accommodations for employee comforts and the promise of a pleasant working environment were most likely driven by the local labor market. With the industrial base of Springfield continuing to expand in the period preceding World War I, the demand and competition for a ready labor supply was extremely high. Reading rooms and other employee amenities were perhaps a cost of doing business and attracting its labor requirements. The symmetrical fenestration of numerous large rectangular windows around all elevations and open floor plan provided abundant light for the meticulous and eye-straining sewing piecework and plenty of ventilation.

The "fireproof" features of the factory building touted by Mr. Heckenlively were of particular importance to the commercial interests of Springfield at the time of its opening in 1917. Springfield's downtown experienced numerous devastating fires during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Baldwin Theater (c. 1891), located at 318-322 St. Louis Street burned to the ground on January 6, 1909. Of greater impact, the entire northeast corner of Springfield's Public Square was destroyed by fire on June 9, 1913. The fire started in the Heer Department Store and quickly spread to the adjacent buildings. In total, eight buildings were lost at a cost of \$800,000. Commercial construction during this period of rapid growth was extremely sensitive to the benefits of "fireproof" protections for workers and customers. Other examples of important "fireproof" construction in Springfield at this time include the Colonial Hotel (c. 1906), the first "fireproof" hotel in the Ozarks located at the corner of St. Louis Street and South Jefferson Avenue, and the Hotel Sansone (c. 1910), located on St. Louis Street (National Register Listed 5/05/00). Both of these "fireproof" hotels were constructed by prominent developer John T. Woodruff.

*Garment Industry Unionization*

The garment manufacturing industry in Springfield expanded significantly over the 20-years following the construction of the original Oberman factory in 1917. By 1935, at least five other garment factories had grown to be significant employers, including E.S. Laurie Manufacturing Company, Jeth-Roe Manufacturing Company, Quality Tailoring Company, Springfield Garment Company and Calvert's (later Black Manufacturing Company). In 1935, the workers of many of these factories successfully organized for representation by the United Garment Workers (UGW) union. The charter for UGW, Local 216 was approved on November 22, 1935. The first business agent of Local 216 was Harry William. The union met every two weeks at Fifth and Castle Hall located on Boonville between Webster and Calhoun Streets across from Pipkin Jr. High School.

The principle role of the union during its early years was to negotiate factory production quotas, which were used to set the wage. Springfield's garment industry generally operated on a piecework basis, with each worker manufacturing a specific section of the completed garment. Quotas were established for each garment piece. The Local 216 representatives and plant managers negotiated to set each quota, with consideration given to factors such as the quality of the equipment, the type of fabric and the difficulty of each task. An independent third party was called in to conduct a time and motion study, when the union and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 18

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

management could not reach agreement on a quota. Investments in modern, more efficient equipment would have many an advantage to factories in negotiated more favorable quotas for wage controls. Through the 1950's, the work day within the industry was 9 hours, with a six-day work week.

Relations between the garment factories and the UGW, Local 216 were generally cooperative. However, an early effort by Oberman and Company, the largest employer within the garment industry, to oust Local 216 from its operations in 1937 did raise considerable controversy. As an alternative to Local 216, representatives of Oberman management worked with key company labor personnel to form the Springfield Oberman Employes Association (SOE), making the factory a "closed shop." The new independent union claimed 893 of the plant's employees, many earlier members of the UGW, Local 216. F.E. Mingus, a 36-year old machinist's helper and 11-year Oberman veteran, was the president of the SOE. On August 4<sup>th</sup>, Oberman employees clocking in for work were met with the following notice hanging over the time clock. At the time, the SOE was reported to be four months old.<sup>12</sup>

"NOTICE! Beginning 7:30, Wednesday, August 4, the Springfield plant of Oberman and Company will be a closed shop in accordance with an agreement between T.R. Oberman, president, and the Springfield Oberman Employees Association."

(Signed) "F.E. Mingus"

In an attempt that day to enforce the new closed shop agreement and with SOE support, Oberman management pulled the time cards of 41 female employees (most UGW, Local 216 members) who had refused to join the SOE. The 41 protested and demanded their time cards. They refused to leave the plant and called for plant manager Jake Kranzberg to hire or fire them. As the day passed and tensions grew, unrest spread throughout the plant. Chief of Police Paul Frey and Sheriff John T. Pierpont were called and Oberman attorney arrived to advise Mr. Kranzberg and address the irate employees. Several incidents of minor violence were reported throughout the plant. The police were stationed outside, but did not enter. Subsequent to the events of August 4, the UGW filed charges against Oberman and Company with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on behalf of the employees. Oberman settled the dispute and reinstated the employees, providing \$22,000 in back pay.

Following mitigation of the Oberman dispute, company and union relations within Springfield's garment industry normalized. In 1962, another conflict arose when Quality Tailoring Company initiated a lay-off of employees when they voted to join Local 216. Initially refusing to bargain, Quality Tailoring did join the union at the bargaining table when the UGW filed charges in June. An agreement was signed in August. The operations at the Oberman factory was unaffected by the Quality Tailoring dispute. For another 20 years, Springfield's garment industry enjoyed a cooperative relationship between company and union. However, it did not enjoy favorable market conditions. Beginning in the 1970's, lower labor costs in the Far

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 19

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

East continued to drive garment production overseas and force domestic plant closings. In March 1982, the UGW, Local 216 surrendered its charter following the close of Springfield's last garment factory, the Black Manufacturing Co., in the previous year.

*Women in the Work Force*

The use of women as its primary labor source was from the beginning a key element in the plans for the development of the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. factory in Springfield. Fifteen years later it became a factor of national interest when women fought the battles of World War II on the home front by meeting the demand for uniforms to clothe soldiers overseas. In this regard, the Oberman factory building is significant as a reflection of the social history of American women and their integration into the work force in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

When the Oberman factory was first constructed in 1917, it had capacity to employ up to 800 workers. The plan was for 90% of these positions to be filled by women. Following expansion of the factory in 1925, the plant's payroll grew to 1,000 workers, with most of the positions filled by women. The nature of the sewing operation made it particularly conducive to the employment of female labor. In turn, the utilization of female workers made the Oberman factory a compatible facility to introduce into the highly competitive Springfield labor market. With the demand for labor escalating in more male-oriented industries like the railroad, milling and iron foundries, Oberman and other garment factories were able to take advantage of the more readily available female labor source. Many of the amenities designed into the original factory plans, such as reading rooms, were intended to help to make the setting more appealing to women workers.

The use of women was a critical factor in the success of the Oberman factory during War World II; and, it was essential to the war effort overseas. The demand for uniforms for American troops placed a significant strain on plant capacity and increasing pressure on the garment industry's female work force. With American men on the front lines, women filled the labor gap in traditionally male dominated local businesses and industries. Without a surplus of women to hire for expanded and additional production shifts, the Oberman factory and garment industries faced an unprecedented competition for its labor source. In 1945, the three Springfield garment factories with Army contracts – Oberman, E.S. Laurie and Springfield Garment – had combined orders for 750,000 pairs of pants. The total labor force to meet the production needs was 1,200 women, a majority within the Oberman factory. Under normal production, 90 women could produce 760 pair of pants a day. Unfortunately, an increase in absenteeism (to a minimum of 7% and sometimes as high as 30%) created production shortfalls, causing orders to begin running up to six weeks behind. At one point, demand outstripped production so significantly that the Army implemented a plan of direct transshipment by plane. The increased absenteeism was attributed to the increase in available income due to overtime and the workers' lack of understanding of their importance to the war effort. In March 1945, Lt. H.W. Matlofsky, a special expediting officer for the Army, visited Oberman and the other two garment factories to rally the labor force. During his visit, he was quoted as saying, "An empty machine is as deadly as an enemy gun."<sup>13</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 20

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

---

With experiences such as these, women in Springfield and across the country found an increased sense of importance and opportunity beyond the household and within the work force. The barriers for women that existed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were no longer impenetrable. Although the return of men to the labor market following World War II displaced many women from their wartime jobs, the face of America's work force was greatly changed. With the post-war economic expansion that followed, women who tasted the freedom and self-sufficiency of employment during wartime were able to find continued opportunity.

**CURRENT CONDITION**

Following the closure of the Oberman factory in 1949, the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building stood vacant for at least two years. By 1952, a new garment manufacturer, Jeth-Roe Manufacturing Company, had located in the building. Max Librach was its manager. Jeth-Roe operated here until the pressures of cheap overseas labor eroded its ability, along with that of other American factories, to compete against foreign-produced goods. The building subsequently was placed into several commercial uses, most recently as The Olde Towne Antique Mall. In 1997, the building was acquired by Boonville Brewing Co., a joint venture of Denver-based Wynkoop Brewing Co. and local residents. In addition to owning the world's largest brew pub in Denver's historic Lower Downtown, the 10-year old Wynkoop had several successes in partnering with local investors in Omaha, Wheeling, Des Moines and Savannah to open brew pubs in rehabilitated historic buildings.<sup>14</sup> However, financing for the Boonville Brewing Co. venture could not be secured and the project did not move ahead. Subsequently vacant, the D.M. Oberman Co. Manufacturing Building was acquired in July 2001 by Lafayette Investment Group, Inc., for rehabilitation and development as a residential loft and commercial lease property overlooking Springfield's new Jordan Valley Park.

**CHRONOLOGY**

The following chronology provides a summary of significant events associated with the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building.

- 1894** James L. Heckenlively, architect, arrives in Springfield, Missouri, and establishes partnership with George F. Reed, forming the firm of Reed & Heckenlively
- 1913** The firm of Reed & Heckenlively dissolves. Shortly after, James L. Heckenlively travels to Europe to continue his architectural studies. He returns prior to 1917
- 1917** January 14. D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. announces acquisition of lot at northeast corner of Boonville and Pine (now Tampa) as site for new garment factory. James L. Heckenlively is selected as architect. Work on construction of the new factory begins immediately.
- 1925** D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. expands Boonville factory with a three-story 125-foot long addition
- 1927** D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. operates as Springfield's second-largest employer with an estimated 1, 000 employees, of which 90% were women

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 21

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

- 
- 1935 November 22. The charter for the United Garment Workers, Local 216 union is approved
- 1937 August 4. Oberman and Company (formerly D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co.) establishes its factory as a "closed shop" through an agreement with the Springfield Oberman Employees Association (SOE), an independent union organized four months earlier. A protest by 41 female workers, most UGW members, protest when time cards are pulled for not joining SOE. UGW files charges with National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Oberman later settles and reinstates the employees.
- 1945 March. Lt. H.W. Matlofsky, a special expediting officer for the Army, visited Oberman and the other two garment factories to rally the labor force to meet demand for uniform pants for American troops
- 1949 Oberman and Company closes Springfield factory. D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building remains vacant until Jeth-Roe Manufacturing Co. establishes its garment operations here. Subsequently, building changes hands for various commercial uses
- 1987 Boonville Brewing Co. acquires Oberman building for planned adaptive reuse as a brew pub. Project halted due to lack of financing. Building left vacant
- 2001 July. Lafayette Investment Group, Inc. acquires property for rehabilitation and development as residential loft and commercial lease property
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**End Notes:**

1. The history of the development of Springfield is well-documented in the Multiple Property Submission Architectural and Historic Resources of Springfield, MO, as well as the district and individual National Register listings noted. For primary sources, reference should be made to: Jonathon Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915). Also, Shanna Boyle and Julie March, eds. Crossroads at the Spring: A Pictorial History of Springfield, Missouri. (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 1997).
2. Milton Rafferty. "From Horsecars to Electric Street Cars, The Golden Age of Mass Transit in Springfield." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield, MO: March, 1982), pp. 13-16.
3. Milton Rafferty. "From Horsecars to Electric Street Cars, The Golden Age of Mass Transit in Springfield - Part II." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield, MO: April, 1982), pp 39-42.
4. For a thorough discussion of the history of manufacturing and industrial development in Springfield, see: Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), pp. 663-671. Also, National Register of Historic Places. Springfield Warehouse and Industrial Historic District. Greene County, MO. Listed June 25, 1999.
5. Springfield Republican. "Site for Oberman Overall Factory Is Obtained Here." (Springfield, MO: January 14, 1917), p. 1.
6. The considerations for acquisition of the lot from Drury College were not reported at the time. Of interest, E.N. Ferguson, a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 22

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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representative of the Merchants' & Jobbers' Association committee that negotiated with D.M. Oberman on the acquisition of the lot, was a trustee of Drury College. This relationship perhaps encouraged a favorable condition for property sale. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), pp. 673-674.

7. R.L. Polk and Co., Polk's Springfield, Directory. (Kansas City: R.L. Polk and Co., 1917), npa.
8. R.L. Polk and Co., Polk's Springfield, Directory. (Kansas City: R.L. Polk and Co., 1935, 1936, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1950), npa.
9. George F. Reed's office was located in the Woodruff Building (422-423) on St. Louis Street. Other architects known to be practicing in Springfield at this time were William E. Foley (202 Baker Block Building) and Arch N. Torbitt (1002-1008 Landers Building). R.L. Polk and Co., Polk's Springfield, Directory. (Kansas City: R.L. Polk and Co., 1917), npa.
10. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), pp. 1837-1839. 11. Springfield Leader and Press. "James L. Heckenlively, Veteran Architect, Dies." (Springfield, MO: August 29, 1938), npa.
12. Springfield Leader and Press. "Independent Union Fires 41 Women at Plants Plant." (Springfield, MO: August 4, 1937), p. 1.
13. Springfield Leader and Press. "Springfield's Making a Big Contribution Toward Keeping American Armies in Pants." (Springfield, MO: March 26, 1945), npa.
14. Springfield News-Leader. "Pub Stirs Up Revitalization Hopes." (Springfield, MO: February 21, 1997), p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 23

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

**Figure 1: Historic Photograph.** Boonville Avenue looking north from the Public Square. The Springfield Traction Company ran the electric streetcar that passed the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. factory six blocks on the east (Photo: c. 1929. History Museum For Springfield-Greene County. Used with permission.)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 24

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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**Sources:**

Boyle, Shanna and Julie March, eds. Crossroads at the Spring: A Pictorial History of Springfield, Missouri. Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 1997.

Fairbanks, Jonathan and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri. Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915.

National Register of Historic Places. Abou Ben Adhem Shrine Mosque. Greene County, MO. Listed September 9, 1982.

National Register of Historic Places. Commercial Street Historic District. Greene County, MO. Listed May 24, 1983.

National Register of Historic Places. Springfield Warehouse and Industrial Historic District. Greene County, MO. Listed June 25, 1999.

National Register of Historic Places. Walnut Street Historic District. Greene County, MO. Listed March 21, 1985.

Rafferty, Milton. "From Horsecars to Electric Street Cars, The Golden Age of Mass Transit in Springfield." Springfield! Magazine. Springfield, MO: March, 1982.

Rafferty, Milton. "From Horsecars to Electric Street Cars, The Golden Age of Mass Transit in Springfield – Part II." Springfield! Magazine. Springfield, MO: April, 1982.

R.L. Polk and Co., Polk's Springfield, Directory. Kansas City: R.L. Polk and Co., 1909, 1917, 1935, 1936, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1955, 1959.

Springfield Leader and Press. "Independent Union Fires 41 Women at Plants Plant." Springfield, MO: August 4, 1937.

Springfield Leader and Press. "James L. Heckenlively, Veteran Architect, Dies." Springfield, MO: August 29, 1938.

Springfield Leader and Press. "Springfield's Making a Big Contribution Toward Keeping American Armies in Pants." Springfield, MO: March 26, 1945.

Springfield News-Leader. "Pub Stirs Up Revitalization Hopes." Springfield, MO: February 21, 1997.

Springfield Republican. "Site for Oberman Overall Factory Is Obtained Here." Springfield, MO: January 14, 1917.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 25

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundary for the D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building is defined as:

Beginning at the northeast corner of Boonville Street and Tampa Street (formerly Pine Street), in the City of Springfield, Greene County, Missouri, thence north along the east line of Boonville Street ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE (135) feet; thence east THREE HUNDRED AND THREE-TENTHS (330.3) feet, more or less, to the west line of Robberson Avenue, thence south along said west line of Robberson Avenue, ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE (135) feet to the north line of Tampa Street, THREE HUNDRED AND THREE-TENTHS (300.3) feet, more or less, to the point of beginning, all in Greene County, Missouri, except any part thereof taken, deeded or used for road or highway purposes.

**Boundary Justification:**

The selected boundary includes the land historically associated with the building's date of significance. The legal description above is maintained by the Greene County Recorder's Office, according to the recorded plat.

*Parcel No. 13- 13-313-014  
Book 2587, Page 1981*

**Source:** Greene County Tax Assessor's Office  
940 Boonville Avenue  
Springfield, MO 65802

417-868-4101

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photographs Page 26

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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**Photographs:**

The same is true for all photographs, except where noted:

D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Building  
600 Boonville Avenue  
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri  
Craig Hosmer  
May 2001

Negatives on file with Historic Springfield, Inc.; P.O. Box 50305; Springfield, MO 65805-0305

**Photo 1:** Richard Lee Burton. July 29, 2001. Primary west elevation (Roll 7, Frame 19)

**Photo 2:** Richard Lee Burton. July 29, 2001. Detail. Main entrance at primary west elevation (Roll 7, Frame 20)

**Photo 3:** Primary west and side south elevation from southeast view (Roll 1, Frame 13)

**Photo 4:** Detail. First bay, first story window at side south elevation (Roll 1, Frame 16)

**Photo 5:** Early period c. 1925 addition. Rear east side of side south elevation (Roll 1, Frame 19)

**Photo 6:** Rear east elevation from northeast view (Roll 2, Frame 6A)

**Photo 7:** Side north elevation from northeast view (Roll 1, Frame 24)

**Photo 8:** Side north elevation (Roll 1, Frame 3)

**Photo 9:** Detail. Fire escape west of center of side north elevation (Roll 1, Frame 2)

**Photo 10:** Interior. First floor of original c. 1917 building facing main entrance at west wall from east (Roll 3, Frame 22)

**Photo 11:** Interior. Open floor typical of c. 1925 addition (Roll 3, Frame 15A)

**Photo 12:** Interior detail. Single windows at first floor north wall of original c. 1917 building (Roll 5, Frame 2A)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photographs Page 27

**D.M. Oberman Manufacturing Co. Building  
Greene County, Missouri**

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**Photo 13:** Interior. Main entrance at first floor west wall view looking up from basement front stairs (Roll 3, Frame 20)

**Photo 14:** Interior. First floor main entrance from side north to south view (Roll 3, Frame 24)

**Photo 15:** Interior detail. Elevator and staircase on north wall of original c. 1917 building (Roll 5, Frame 3A)

**Photo 16:** Interior detail. Elevator at first floor northeast corner of building in c. 1925 addition (Roll 4, Frame 15)



1230' U.S. Roadway  
 15/414400/100000  
 Mountain  
 University  
 Spring  
 Airport  
 1230' U.S. Roadway  
 15/414400/100000

116

117

119



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MD Photo 1



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MD Photo 2



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MD Photo 3



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MD Photo 4



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 5



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 6



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 7



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 8



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 9



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 10



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 11



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 12



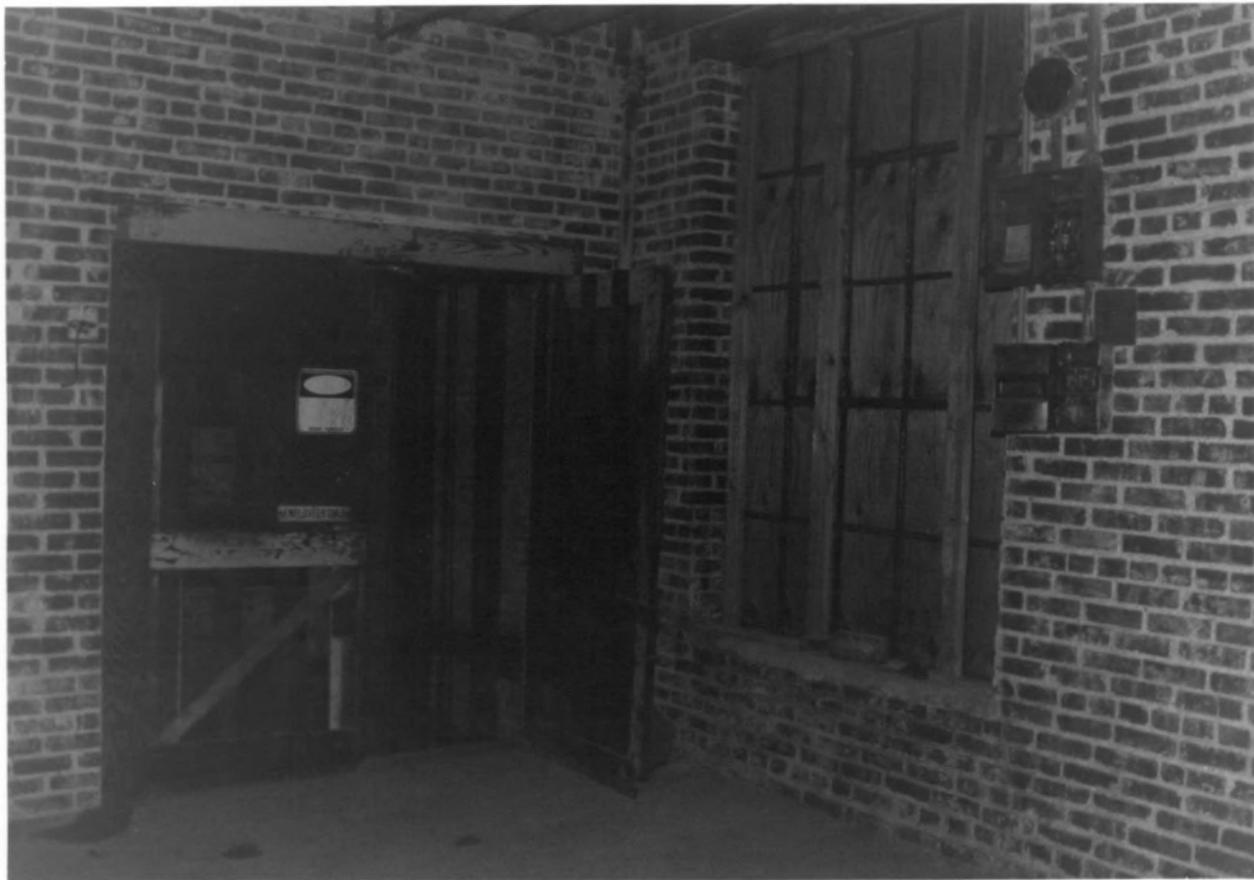
D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 13



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 14



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 15



D.M. Oberman Mfg. Co. 600 Boonville Avenue Springfield, Greene Co., MO Photo 16