

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Opera Hall Block

other names/site number Farmers State Bank Building/Citizens National Bank Building

**2. Location**

street & number 101-03 West Vermont/101-03 S. Connecticut [n/a] not for publication

city or town King City [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Gentry code 075 zip code 64443

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )



25 March 82  
Date

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

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

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
Commerce/Trade Financial Institution  
Recreation and Culture Theatre  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
Domestic /multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
Romanesque Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Commerce

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

**Periods of Significance**

1895-1935

**Significant Dates**

n/a

**Significant Person(s)**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Marshall, David

**8. 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: Tri-County Museum  
Gentry County Library

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	370040	4434320			

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 Nancy Sandehn  
organization NES Consultant date March 25, 2002  
street & number P O Box 43 telephone 816-279-3558  
city or town St. Joseph state MO zip code 64502-0043

**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 Paul Spiking  
street & number 7480 NW Berlin Rd. telephone 660-535-4737  
city or town King City state MO zip code 64443

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

## DESCRIPTION

### Description Summary

The Opera Hall Block is a two and one-half story load bearing brick Romanesque Revival commercial building. Occupying the N 110' of a 150' deep city lot, the building is situated at the south west corner of the intersection of the main business street (Vermont) of the town and the highway (U.S. 169/Connecticut St.) which passes through the town. The building stands proudly at the most significant corner of the business district of King City, Gentry County, MO. Vermont St. which fronts the building is lined with brick structures, particularly in the block to the east. Ornamentation includes examples of pattern laid brick, corbelling, sandstone and wrought metal. A prominent feature of the exterior is an oriel at the northeast corner of the building. Window and door alterations were made in 1939, at the time the building was converted into apartments.

### Description Narrative

#### Exterior:

The Opera Hall Block is a 50' X 110' rectangle, facing north and standing two and one half stories. A lot which slopes to the south allows the basement level to be partially above ground at the south end. The primary or Vermont Street facade is three bays and the secondary or Connecticut Street facade is seven bays.

The building is built of load bearing pressed brick. Ornamentation of the primary and secondary facades includes various examples of brick corbelling and patterning. A continuous lintel meets rounded brick pilasters which define the edges of the clipped northeast corner. This corner had a double leaf door entering the former banking room, which is now converted to single leaf. (1) The banking room windows were three quarter length with fixed single pane and transom. To the west of the banking room is a single leaf doorway which accesses stairs to the second floor. A semi-circular multiple row brick header above this door is similar in form to those above windows on the second floor.

Windows which first served the banking room, originally full length with transom, have had a portion of the opening bricked up. An original single leaf door to the rear of the banking room has also been bricked up. A business space at the west side of the primary facade retains its original configuration; recessed doorways with display windows. Business entrances on the east, or Connecticut, facade have had varied alterations although their original appearance is apparent.

A wood sheathed oriel at the northeast corner, rises from a seashell base positioned immediately above the former bank entrance. At the second floor level of the oriel are three narrow windows, now partially boarded up, which originally were double hung with transoms. Interstices are decorated with ornate metal castings. Above the windows are three ornamental bands. Above a cornice which circles the building as well as the oriel, there are three more windows which once served the upper level of the Opera Hall. The oriel is topped by a conical tile roof.

Second floor windows are semi-circular with ornate brick voussoirs. Windows originally had a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

center double hung sash with transom and sidelights which were curved at the top. Millwork between panes and at sides is carved at the bottom and top. Sills are stone throughout. A band of sandstone ornaments the base of the semi-circular portion of the second floor windows. This semi-circular portion has now been closed up with wood.

The building has a truncated hip roof, which allowed the space needed for the Opera Hall stage and its accouterments.

The dentil trimmed cornice which circles the building is broken only at spaces where ornamental elements rise to the lip of the roof. On the secondary facade the roof is drained by downspouts which have oversize heads.

The rear or south wall is of soft brick and is partially stuccoed over. It appears that there may have been an abutting one story building. The wall is not ornamented. Windows and doors with arched brick voussoirs have been altered. The stairway on this wall is apparently not original. The west wall which abuts a one story building next door is also unornamented.

**Interior:**

Very little remains of the original interior except the stairway leading to the Opera Hall and professional offices. The scored plaster walls of the stairway appear original but the balustrade at the top is probably an alteration. What else may remain has been obliterated or masked by the conversion of the building into apartments.

Doors to efficiency apartments line a center hallway on the second floor. The doors now have a solid center panel but probably were louvered when the building was converted. At the south end of the second floor there is access to the "attic" level, which retains remnants of the Opera Hall. These remnants include the framing for the proscenium arch as well as the interior of the oriel.

A large brick vault added to building in 1916 remains in the basement.

The contracted purchaser intends to restore the ground floor to its original configuration and commercial uses. Conversion of the upper floor/ "attic" into upscale living spaces is also intended.

End note

1) The Opera Hall Block was built in 1894-5 by the Farmers Bank of King City.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3



Picture of Opera Hall Block c. 1920

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

## SIGNIFICANCE

### Significance Summary

The Opera Hall Block meets National Register Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Entertainment/Recreation, and Criterion C, Architecture. The history of the Opera Hall Block, 101-03 Vermont, King City, Gentry County is in many ways typical of the history of such buildings throughout America. Built in 1895 after a disastrous fire devastated the town's commercial center, the building has housed banks, businesses, offices and a public hall during its long history. The Opera Hall hosted a variety of events, including school programs and plays, lectures, Masonic banquets and at least one performance by jazz musician Blind Boone. The felt need of the community for a public meeting hall was so great that the Opera Hall was used for at least one event prior to final completion of the building.

An example of the high style commercial construction found on small city Main Streets throughout Missouri, the Romanesque Revival style building, with its ornate oriel window which rises above the building's roofline as a tower, stands at the junction of a U.S. Highway and the main business street of the community. When architectural historian Richard Longstreth prepared his typology of the buildings found on Main Street he might have chosen the Opera Hall Block as an example of the two part commercial block.

The building retains many of its exterior elements. Alterations to the exterior facade, which are retrofitable, reflect a common phenomenon in the life of these buildings, for example, the desire or necessity to "modernize" as uses changed. The period of significance is from the 1895 completion of the building until 1939, when it was converted into efficiency apartments.

### Significance Narrative

The Opera Hall Block is a testimony to the commercial vitality of a Gentry County, Missouri community of just over 1000 residents in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century. When virtually the entire business district burned to the ground in October, 1893 the business community rebuilt within two years.

The community need for a public hall was satisfied when the banking firm which built the building decided to add a second floor so that an Opera Hall might be included. The addition of income from rental of shops and office spaces supported the primary use of the builder. The bank originally occupied only the northeast corner room in this large building.

### The two part commercial block

The Opera Hall Block is a prime example of those elements identified by Dr. Richard Longstreth as typifying the two part commercial block. Developing as a distinct type in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was built in numbers until after World War II. The primary feature of this type is a horizontal



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

division into two disparate uses, a division which is reflected in the facade. There are marked differences in the glazing of ground and upper floors. Ground floors, with their business tenancies, tend to have large areas of window glazing while upper floor windows are more decorative, reflecting use as a public or fraternal hall. Shopfront doors are often recessed and double leaf. Frequently a cornice or stringcourse above the ground floor designates the change in usage. The space needs of a public or fraternal hall dictate that the upper floor will be the taller than the ground floor.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, many of those who built this type building chose the Romanesque Revival style. The facade(s) would be ornamented with decorative patterns in wood, stone, brick and cast or stamped iron. Turrets, towers and oriel windows would create picturesque effects and attract attention to the building.

The two part commercial block remains the most common type commercial building in small to middle sized communities and makes an important contribution to community streetscapes.

Uses common to the type included banks, shops, professional offices and public or fraternal halls. Each of these uses was present for the period of significance of this building.

### Early community history

Gentry County was on the western edge of the state of Missouri when it was admitted to the Union, but there was little settlement in this prairie area of the county until after the Platte Purchase in 1836. (1) In 1856, John Pittsenbarger, a blacksmith by trade, emigrated from Indiana, by way of Iowa. From Iowa he had followed a wagon freighting trail which connected a number of points in that state with St. Joseph, MO, the thirteen year old trade center on the Missouri River. (2)

Claiming the SW quarter of the NE quarter of Section 32, Township 61, Range 35W, he pitched his tent and established a smithy. Soon thereafter he dug a well to provide water for travelers on the wagon route and later built a home which doubled as a hostel where travelers could seek food and/or overnight lodging. It was from this beginning that a thriving trade center for a wide area developed, and with it the community of King City, Missouri. (3)

### The advent of the railroad and its effect

The single event which would change King City from a slowly growing farm trade town into a thriving commercial center was the arrival of a railroad in 1879. (4) Rail service provided fast and dependable access to markets and supply sources for the residents of the King City area, and the town grew rapidly.

On September 16, 1879, the plat for Kate Carter's First Addition to King City in the NE<sup>4</sup> NE<sup>4</sup> Section 32, Township 61N, Range 32W, was filed. The majority of the business district is located in this addition including the Opera Hall Block, on the N 110', Lot 1, Block 7.

The establishment of two banks was included in the rapid growth of the commercial life of the city following arrival of the railroad (5) The King City Bank (later First State Bank, then First National Bank, then once again First State Bank) was established in 1880 by George Ward. The Farmers Bank of King City, grew out of the insurance and real estate business of William Millan. Millan, a native of St. Louis, had

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

grown up on a farm immediately north of King City. The minute book of the bank disappeared long ago and with it the date of its founding. (6) The lives of persons who owned or worked at these two banks intertwine in the story of the Opera Hall Block.

The community's first newspaper, the *King City Chronicle*, was established in April, 1881 by George C. Strock. (7) At that time the southwest corner of the intersection of Vermont and Connecticut Streets was occupied by the McCarty and Millan General Store and both sides of Vermont east and west from Connecticut were almost totally occupied by businesses.

### Rebuilding and Banking

The smooth tenor of development would come to an abrupt end when, on October 20, 1893, virtually the entire commercial heart of the city burned to the ground. One of the losses was William Millan's General Store at the southwest corner of Vermont and Connecticut. (8) In addition to operating the general store, Millan was President of The Farmers Bank of King City. The bank building, located two lots west of the store, lost only its plate glass front. At the time of the fire the officers of the Farmers Bank of King City were, in addition to Millan, Kieran McKenney, Vice President and D. F. Robertson, Cashier. The officers of the First National Bank were J. H. Ward, President; David Bonham, Vice President; George Ward, Cashier and Austin Bonham, Assistant Cashier.

Rather than being defeated by the massive losses, the businessmen of King City immediately began rebuilding. It was reported that even before the ashes had cooled, George Ward, Cashier of the First National Bank, had called David Marshall, a St. Joseph contractor, about having his bank building at the corner of Vermont and Ohio rebuilt. Marshall would also become the contractor for construction of the Opera Hall Block.

The abstract for Lot 1, Block 7, Kate Carter's First Addition records that on June 6, 1894, William Millan and his wife Jessie sold the lot to The Farmers Bank of King City for \$1300.00. In an advertisement on page 5 of the June 29, 1894 *King City Chronicle*, Millan announced that he was retiring from the general merchandise business to pursue other interests, and that he was selling his stock to Owens, Green and Hawthorne. (9)

Progress on the construction of the Opera Hall Block can be traced in articles in the *King City Chronicle*:

August 3, 1894 "It is expected that work on the new Farmers' (sic) Bank rooms and the Kessler and Edwards buildings will commence next week and be pushed to completion. We understand the bank will occupy the old Millan corner; next to this a large business room; over the two, in front, offices; over the rear will be a public hall; entrances from the front stairway to offices and hall."

September 28, 1894, "The new brick blocks begin to look very business like. Some of the roofing is being laid this week"

October 5, 1894 "The bricklayers are away this week. Mr Marshall, the contractor, having some work in St. Joseph that was urgent. The men will return next week and push the brick work on the opera block. In the meantime carpenters are rushing the woodwork on the buildings here."

November 2, 1894 "That immense and handsome structure, The Farmers'(sic)Bank Building is being pushed toward completion".

The *King City Chronicle* carried no banner announcement of the move of the Farmers Bank of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

King City into their new quarters in the spring of 1895. Apparently the officers felt that everyone knew their location so that no address or announcement was needed. On March 22, 1895, professional ads inserted in the *King City Chronicle* by physician and surgeon C. H. McCaslin and by J. B. Woodside D.D.S. identified their location as "office in the new Opera Block" The storefront at the west side of the first floor had been occupied by Severe Brothers General Store in early March. On May 24, the professional ad of dentist G. L. Miller announced his location as "In the Opera Block over new Farmers' (sic) Bank room" and one placed by barber Dan Wilson stated he was in "the south end of the Opera Block"

The Farmers Bank of King City did not have long to enjoy its new quarters. A corporate memorandum filed on March 7, 1896, and included as a part of the Abstract of Title, states in part "Whereas, the said Farmers Bank of King City, is justly indebted in divers sums of money to different creditors and depositors, which it is unable at the present time to discharge in full, and desires to make a fair distribution of its property and assets to its said creditors" The Corporation assigned its property to Vice President, Kieran McKenny and board member, Edwin Ennis (10) The assignees were instructed "That the said parties of the second part shall, as soon as possible and upon such terms as they may deem best sell the property hereby assigned, collect all debts and claims now outstanding and convert the same into money, for the benefit of the creditors of it the said Farmers Bank of King City" Ennis resigned almost immediately, leaving McKenny to follow the instructions. It took some months for McKenny to accomplish his task. On April 7, 1899, Gentry County land records show that Kieran McKenny, assignee of the Farmers Bank of King City, sold the assets of the corporation to John F. McKenny, William Millan, Louelyn Pratt, F. X. VanAusdale, James Davis and George Ward for \$9000.00. This group, with others, then formed the Citizens State Bank and opened for business in April, 1901. David Bonham was named President, Judge Kieren McKenny, Vice President and Austin Bonham, Cashier of the restructured bank. Directors were Jacob Levy, Thomas Flourke, William Millan, G. S. Kemp and W. H. VanNatta. Both Bonhams had been officers of the First National Bank. In 1902 the bank received a Federal Charter and would remain a National Bank until it closed.

Operation of the bank and ownership of the building were separated in 1903 and 1904. (11)

During the Stock Market speculation of 1907 the two banks in King City adopted a plan which was announced in the *King City Chronicle*. "For the protection of the public and business interests... only checks and drafts for \$25.00 or less will be paid in currency, and not more than \$50.00 in any one week on any account. Checks for any amount will be received on deposit subject to check on the above conditions" Signed: First National Bank by George Ward, Cashier; Citizens National Bank by J. F. McKenny, Cashier"

### Bluegrass

One of the more unusual and financially rewarding commercial enterprises of the King City area was harvesting bluegrass seed and shipping it nationwide. In early 1894, Kentuckian James G. Ficklin arrived in King City. He recognized the quality of the bluegrass which grew in the prairies surrounding King City and knew there was market for the seed. (12) The harvesting of bluegrass seed spun off another enterprise when carpenter A. P. Maupin improved the design of the seeders and, with Jodie Timmons, began the manufacture of these implements in 1902. It was not unusual for over 8000 bushels of seed to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

be processed annually. In 1916, at the height of the bluegrass seed enterprise the following appeared on page 1 of the July 21st issue of the *King City Chronicle*: "This week, excavations are being made for more basement room at the Citizens National Bank. We are informed that considerable improvement is to be made in the way of vault room and a larger back office room. In the present office room there will be a new vault put in and there will be a vault in the basement under the new vault. Then the north room, where Dr. Barbour now offices, will be used for an office room. These improvements will add much to the convenience and accommodation of the management and patrons of this bank. The bank's increasing business needed these improvements"

### Road improvements

In the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, transportation once again impacted King City, adding to the commercial development of the community. With the steady increase in automobile traffic came pressure to improve roads. King City general store owner, J.T. Wagers, was one of the original members of the Inter-State Trails Association. The Association promoted the efficacy of a north-south transcontinental highway. In 1915 the decision was made that the first such road, later named the Jefferson Highway, would follow the old wagon freighting road between St. Joseph and the Iowa state line. When it passed through King City the designated route made many turns, probably in order to pass as many businesses and public buildings as possible. Entering from the south it ran north on Havre to Elm, turned east to Connecticut, north to Vermont, east to Ohio, north to Putnam, east to Grand and then north to the city limits. The route took the road past the Citizens National Bank corner and that of the First State Bank. At first the road was graveled, then oiled on one side. It was not until the 1930's that it was finally "macadamized". The present route through town, designed by the State Highway Department in 1939, still passes the Opera Hall Block corner, although not that of the successor to the First Bank.

### Citizens National Bank closes

On May 17, 1935 the *King City Chronicle* published a Page 1 article which announced that the Citizens National Bank was quitting business. "The board of directors have voted to place the Citizens National Bank in liquidation, and has sold to the First State Bank of King City, Missouri a sufficient amount of its notes to make it possible to pay its depositors in full.....The officers and directors of the Citizens National Bank would be pleased if its customers would become customers of the First State Bank of King City. (signed) CITIZENS NATIONAL BANK, J. F. Kenney, President"

Following the announcement the article went on to say "Banks are liquidating all over the country, and where they once were money making institutions, they are, in many instances, struggling with making expenses, and there are not any profits for the stockholders, that the bank was ceasing business because it could not pay its stockholders. The Citizens National Bank quit when it was no longer able to pay dividends to the stockholders and not for any other reason. The depositors are being asked to call and get their money, and all are to be paid 100 cents on the dollar." The article also reported that the President, J. F. McKenney, and Assistant Cashier, Leila Barbour, would remain at the bank to close out the business. Cashier, Oren Simmons, and Bookkeeper, Roy Lux, would move to the First State Bank (13)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

## The Opera Hall

The community's need for the hall was so acute that it was put into use even before the entire building was completed. Commercial spaces in the building, including the banking room, were not fully occupied until the spring of 1895. On December 27, 1894 the Masonic fraternity held a Public Installation and Banquet. The installation was in the Opera Hall and the banquet in "the large room below." In the lengthy article about the event comments are made about how cold the Opera Hall was. These included "Owing to a transom being left open in the ceiling by the workmen and not discovered in time, the hall was uncomfortably cold."

Not to be put off by the yet incomplete building a short article in the January 4, 1895 *Chronicle* announced that "The Boston Madrigal Company has been scheduled for January 8, 1895 at the new opera hall in King City at 7:30 pm. Tickets for sale by J. E. Kessler and Bro."

On February 22nd, 1895 the King City Public School celebrated George Washington's birthday with a patriotic program of music, exercises and a play called *The Stamp Act*, at the Opera Hall. The Primary, Grammar, Intermediate Departments and High School were all represented. This apparently was the first program in a completed Opera Hall.

A sampling of other events held in the Opera Hall and either advertised or reported in the *King City Chronicle* includes:

On February 13, 1899 Fred Wise, George Bradley and James Henson, three young men from King City, who had served in the Spanish American war returned home on the morning train. The following Friday night the Opera Hall was the scene of a gala welcome reception for the three and their companions from other parts of Gentry County

On April 23, 1901, the Ladies Improvement Society, which was raising money to build a wooden sidewalk to the Cemetery, booked the Opera Hall for an exhibition of the newly developed moving picture called "Life Motion Pictures" Admission was \$.25, \$.35 for reserved seats.

In December, 1911, the first Corn and Poultry show was held in King City. During the show, agricultural lectures in were held in the Opera Hall

The Cantata "Redeemer and King" was performed at the Opera Hall on New Years Eve, December 31, 1911. Mrs. L. C. Strumph directed a chorus of 40 voices. Soloists were Kate, daughter of James Millan and Ann, daughter of William Millan

Jazz musician Blind Boone, a native of Columbia, Missouri, performed to sold out crowds at the Opera hall beginning in 1905.

From the date of its completion until 1912, when the Lucille Theater was built, King City School graduations were held at the Opera Hall (14)

The Opera Hall declined in use when many of the shows which came to town booked their presentations at the Lucille Theater. However, persons remember being told about performances there in the late 1920's.

Although the building's commercial activity ceased in the mid 1930's, its life was extended when King City entrepreneur Rufus Limpp converted it into apartments. The apartments which were "state of the art" in 1939, now need upgrading.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

End Notes

- 1) The 1836 treaty which added the Platte country to the state opened access to the transportation possibilities of the Missouri River, added land which was forested to provide wood for construction and moved the Indian communities, who had lived here, west of the Missouri River.
- 2) By 1856, St. Joseph was already a major trade center for the lands west of the Missouri and had outfitted the many migrants who traveled to the Gold Rush. Three years later it would become the terminus of The Hannibal and St. Joseph RR, the first to reach the Missouri River.
- 3) On November 1, 1869, Pittsenbarger filed a town plat on the eastern edge of his claim where his smithy and well were located. He chose the name King City after the name of the Post Office which had been established in 1862. The wagon road from St. Joseph to the King City Post office was also designated a Post Road. William Carter, a native of New Hampshire, arrived at the new town in 1870, purchased 340 acres (the SE quarter and N one-half NE quarter Section 32, Twp 61N, Range 35W) and with partner Anson Curtis, opened the town's first general store. Carter had previously been a merchant in St. Joseph. An 1878 Atlas of Gentry County reported that the town had "four stores, three hotels, and a Presbyterian church. Population about 100". The Village of King City was incorporated in May 1881 and by 1884 the city had grown sufficiently to incorporate as a City of the 4th Class
- 4) The St. Joseph and Des Moines Railroad was incorporated in 1877, to build a railroad from St. Joseph to/or near Albany, the county seat of Gentry county. The right of way generally followed the route of the old wagon trail/Post Road. The railroad was completed to Helena, Andrew County in November, 1878, to Union Star, DeKalb County in March, 1879, to King City in July, 1879 and to Albany in November, 1879. Also in the fall of 1879, the Council Bluffs and Omaha Division of the Wabash Railroad was completed from St. Louis to Council Bluffs/Omaha. A station, named Darlington, was established where the two lines intersect several miles northeast of King City. Rail connections to the north and east from Albany followed in the early 1880's.
- 5) Banks would often begin as private ventures, then seek and gain State or Federal charters, after which they would build an imposing edifice to house the bank.
- 6) This is attested to in the corporate memorandum issued by the bank's officers in April, 1896 and included in the Abstract of Title
- 7) Strock, a reporter for *The St. Joseph Gazette*, made a trip to Albany on the new railroad in the fall of 1880 and was impressed by the country side and the nascent town. At the urging of King City railroad station master, William T. Dickens, and banker J. H. Ward, he moved to the developing city. In March, 1891 he sold the paper to L. T. Moulton. The newspaper would remain a vital part of the community until 1947 under the leadership of Moulton and later Tracy Stahlman. In January, February and March 1906 Strock, then the Editor and Publisher of *The Albany Ledger*, in the county seat, wrote a series of letters which were published in the *King City Chronicle*, recounting his early days in King City. According to these accounts, the intersection of Vermont and Connecticut Streets was the "center" of the business district.
- 8) Millan had bought out his partner McCarty in 1889

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

9) After the fire, the stock of Millan's General Store had been moved to an old skating rink across Vermont St. from the Farmers Bank of King City.

10) The bank's President, William Millan, had married a distant cousin, Jessie Lutett, while visiting Australia in 1886. At the time of the bank's demise Millan was visiting Australia and did not take part in the corporate decision to go out of business. Millan and his family would make several more trips to Australia. Millan remained a Board member of the successor Citizen's National Bank until it closed.

11) On July 17, 1903 James Davis and Louelyn Pratt sold a 1/3 interest in the building and its lot to businessman J. H. Phippen. Phippen later willed this interest to his daughter Laura (Mrs. Anthony) Graves. In early 1904 Ward, McKenney, Millan and VanAusdale sold their interests in the building to Anthony Graves and wife. There follows a tale of numerous mortgages of the building until it was purchased in 1935 by Rufus Limpp. The Graves ownership of the building seems to have had no connection to the bank's operation.

12) Ficklin recruited brothers J. T. and Eph Simmons who, in turn, recruited crews of local men willing to harvest the seed. After harvest the seed was taken to town, spread out in drying yards and hand raked to dry evenly in the heat of the sun. By 1900 Ficklin had 8 crews of men working and that year 3000 to 3500 bushels of seed were gathered and cured. The harvesting of bluegrass seed would remain an important industry until the mid 1930's, and would spread to operations in Worth County to the north and DeKalb County to the south. At one time there were no less than three seed warehouses in operation in King City.

13) Oren Simmons was the son-in law of James Millan, the younger brother of William Millan, former President of the Farmers Bank of King City and Director of the Citizens National Bank. Roy Lux had come from Centralia, KS to join the bank in June, 1926.

14) The Lucille was built as a combination Movie house and performing arts venue. It had the added advantage of not being on the second floor.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

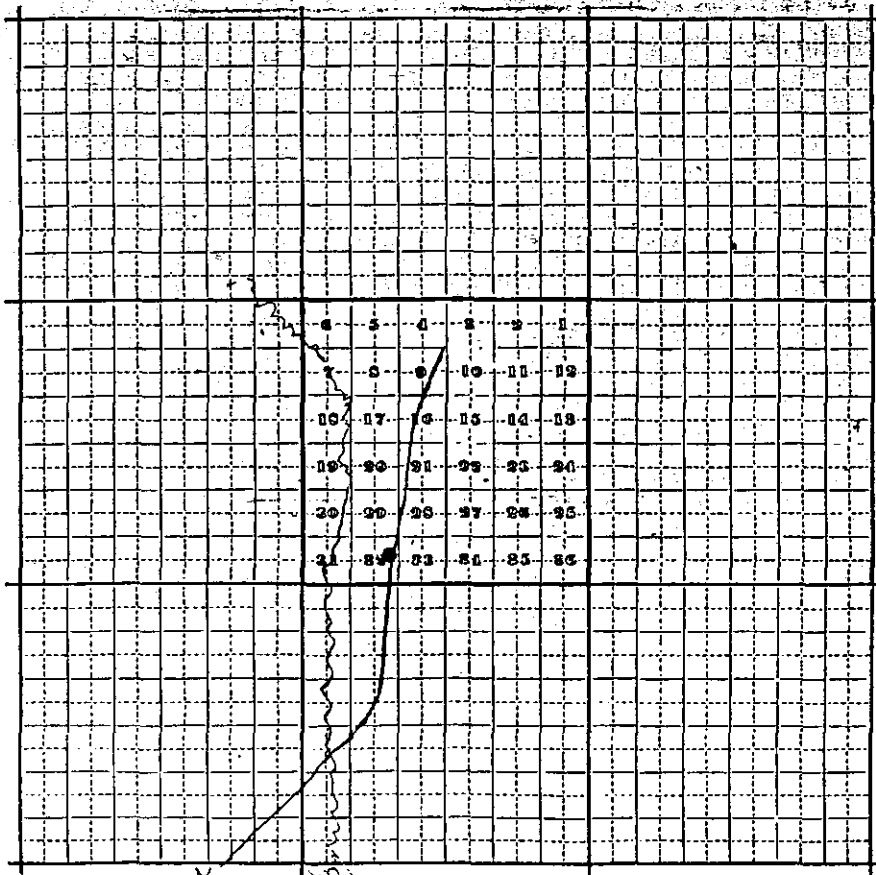
Section 8 Page 12

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

Diagram showing the site of the King City Post Office  
in Township 61 Range 13 of the 13 Principal  
Meridian, County of Gentry State  
of Missouri, with the adjacent Townships and Post  
Offices.

It is requested that the exact site of the proposed, or existing  
Post Office, as also the roads to the adjoining offices, and the larger  
streams or rivers, be marked on this diagram, to be returned as soon  
as possible to the Post Office Department.

(North.)



Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to the mile.

(South.)

Map from an early Post Office report, showing the wagon trail/post road going south from King City

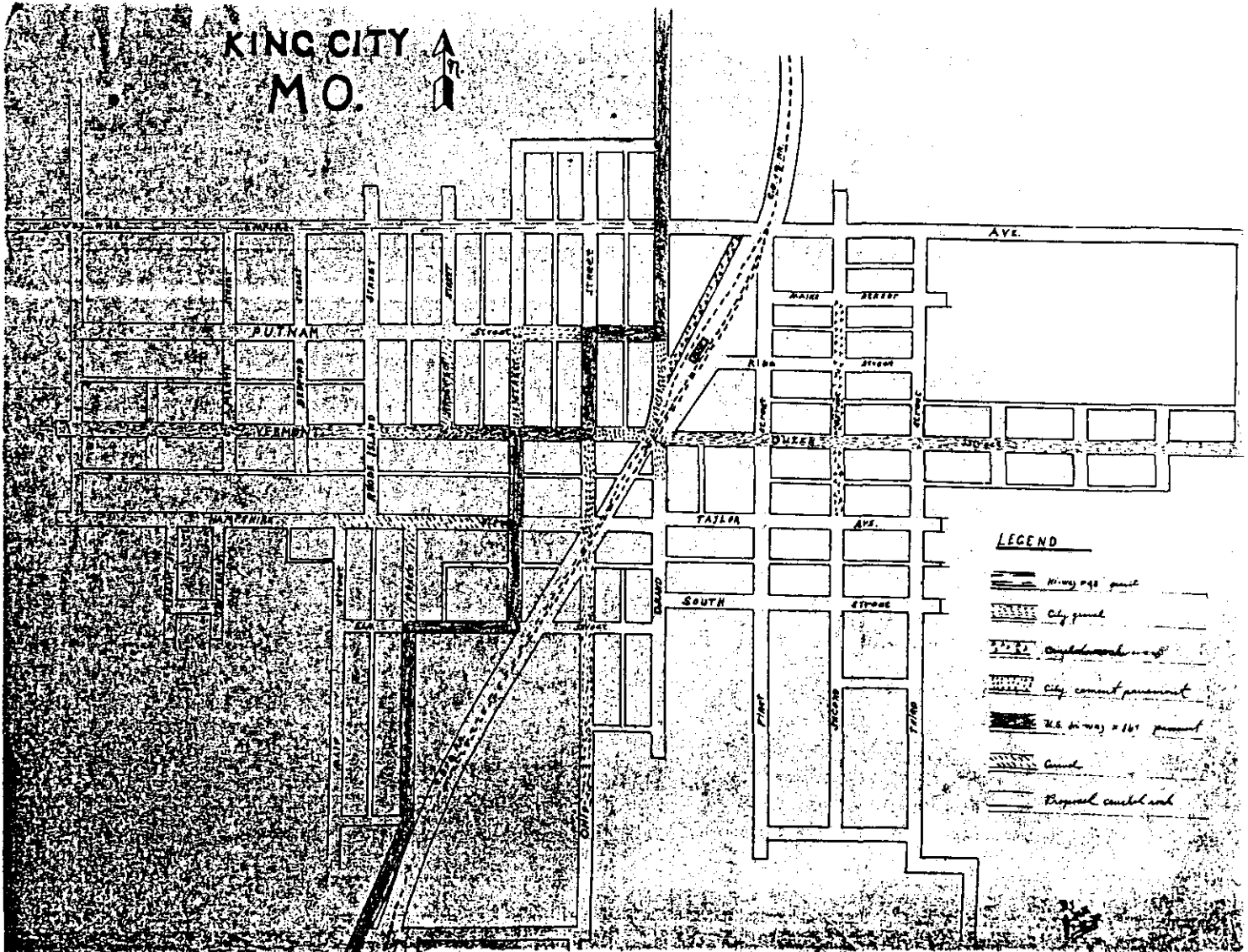


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri



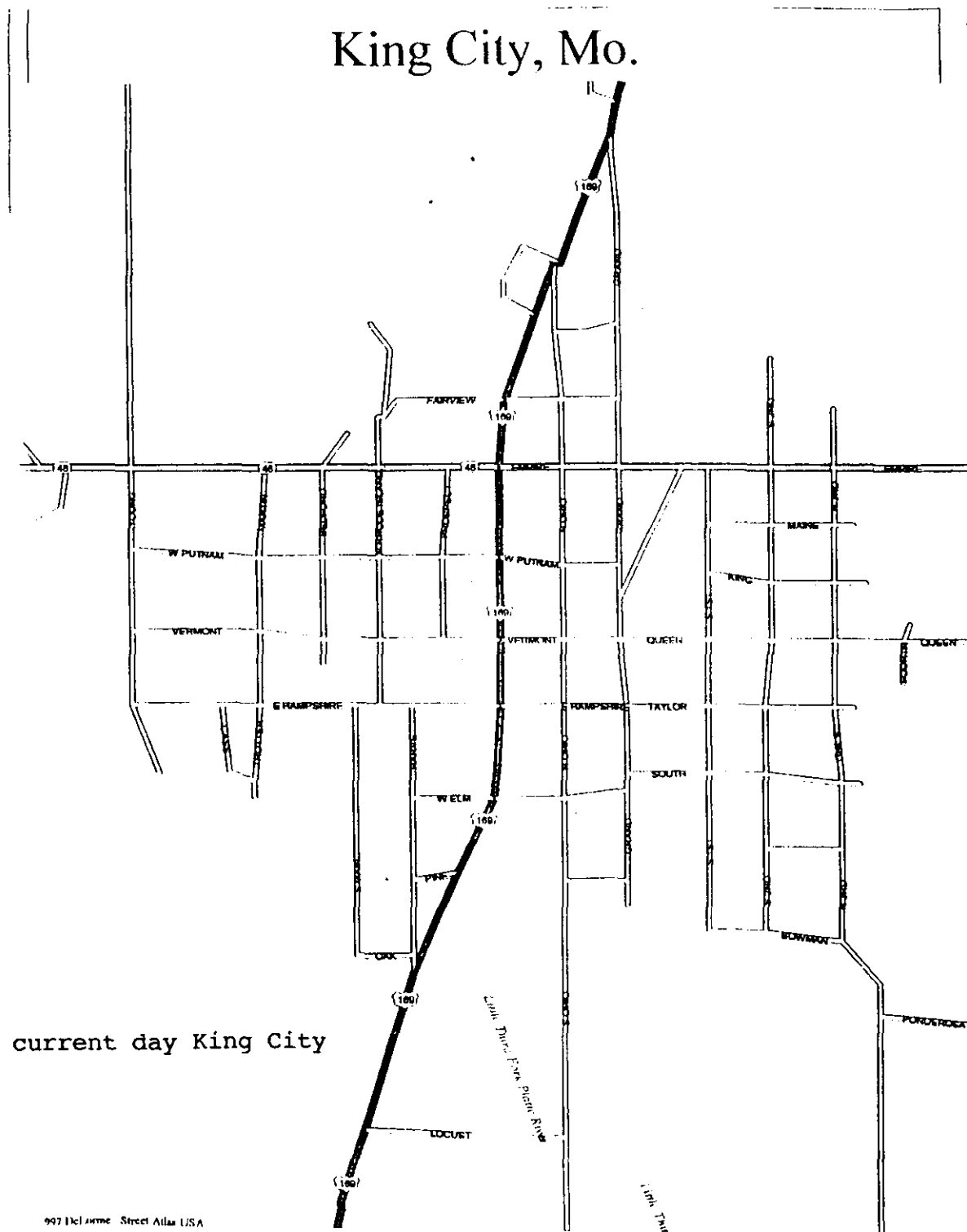
Map showing routes of the railroad and the highway through the town

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 & 10  
Page 15

Opera Hall Block  
Gentry County, Missouri

---

## Bibliography

Built in the U.S.A., American Buildings from Airports to Zoos. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1985

King City Chronicle various dates 1890-1935 (microfilm)

Limpp, Isabel B. King City, 1856-1940 North Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Press, Inc. 1983

Longstreth, Richard The Buildings of Main Street. A Guide to American Commercial Architecture. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1987

Rifkind, Carole A Field Guide to American Architecture. New York, New York: The New American Library, Inc. 1980

Whiffen, Marcus & Koerper, Frederick. American Architecture, 1607-1976. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981

Abstract of Title for Lot 1, Block 7, Kate Carter's First Addition to King City

### Personal Interviews:

David Waltemath, Loan Officer, Citizens Bank and Trust, King City, at the bank, several dates

Ivan Wilson, Real Estate broker, at his office, several dates

Dan Lewis, President, Tri-County Historical and Museum Society, several dates

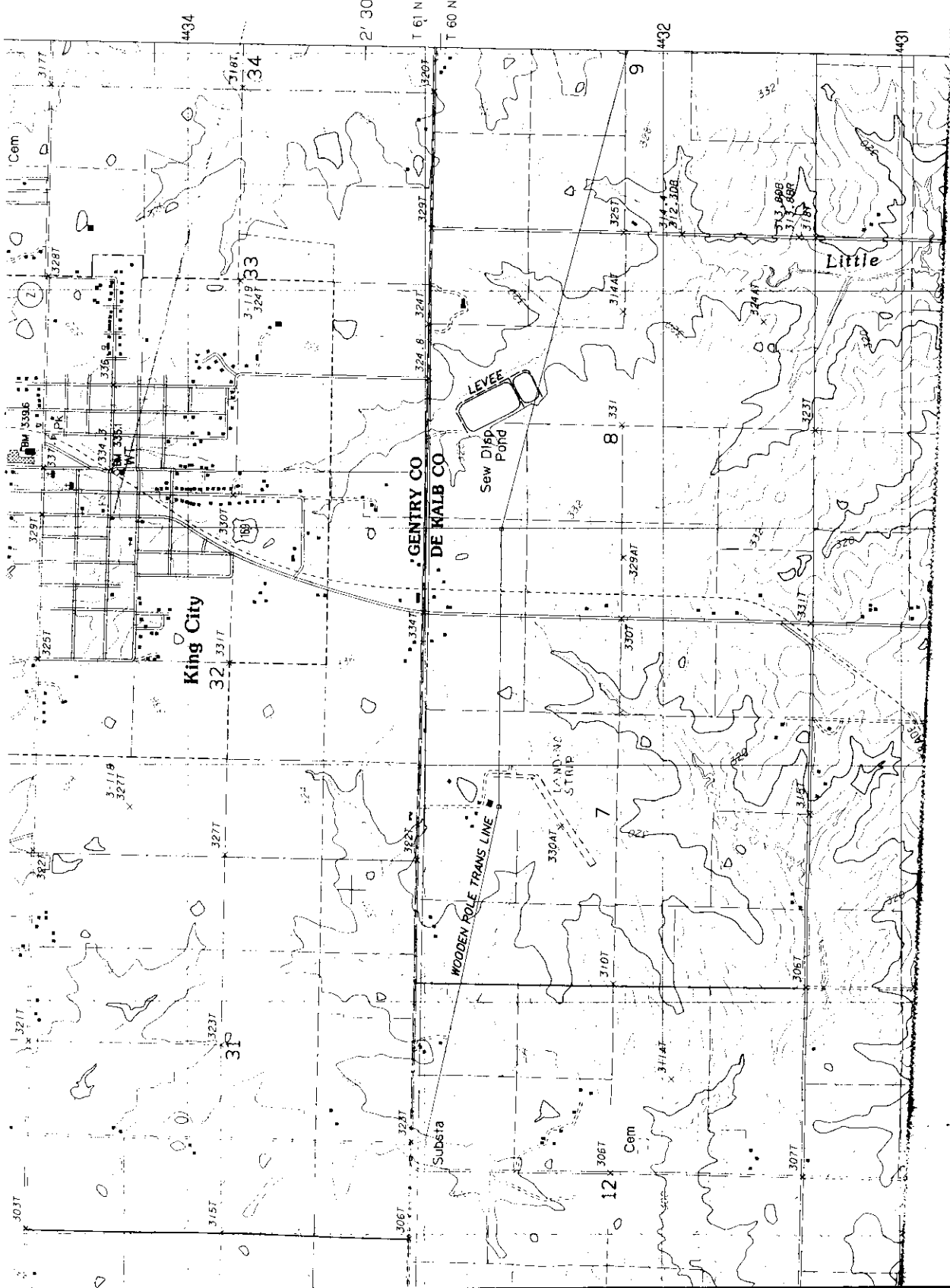
## Verbal Boundary Description

North 110' Lot 1, Block 7, Kate Carters First Addition to King City

## Boundary Justification

The south 40' of Lot 1 was sold to another owner several years ago. The building does not rest on this portion of the lot.

Cont. ...  
King City  
Gentry Co  
2' 30" U.T.M. reference  
15/370040/423420



Opera The Black  
101-03 Vermont / 101-03 South Connecticut  
King City, Centre County MO  
Nancy Sandelin  
Oct 19, 2001  
Nancy Sandelin, P.O. Box 15, S. S. Scept, MO  
W 52  
#1



10 19 01

Charmelle & Phil  
2 East W. Vermont / Home St. Danvers, MA  
King City, Gentry County, MO  
Nancy Sanderson  
Deborah & Don  
Nancy Smith, P.O. Box #821, Souders, MO  
SSE  
#2



HEET GAS CO. INC.

ESTILL

STOP

10 19 '01



Opera Hall Block

101-23 W Vermont / 101-23 S. Connecticut

King City, Gentry County, MO

Nancy Sandelin

October 19, 2001

Nancy Sandelin, P.O. Box 43 St Joseph, MO

South

#3



VERMONT

STOP

5  
6  
0  
1

Opera House Block

101-03 N. Vermont / 101-03 S Connecticut

King City, Gentry County, Mo

Nancy Sandehn

October 19, 2001

Nancy Sandehn, P.O. Box 43, St. Joseph, Mo

Detail: 191's Bank vault

N. H.

# 2



10 19 '01

Opera Hall Block  
101-03 W. Vermont / 101-03 S Connecticut  
King City, Gentry County, MO  
Nancy Sandehn  
October 19, 2001  
Nancy Sandehn 29 Box 43, St. Louis, Mo  
Detail: Mantel, Banking room  
West  
#5

10 19 01



Opera Hall Block

101-03 W. Vermont / 101-03 S Connecticut

King City, Gentry County, Mo

Nancy Sundelin

October 19, 2001

Nancy Sundelin, P.O. Box 73 St Joseph, Mo

Entrance to Opera Hall

North

# 6



10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95



Opus 1 Seal Block

51-25 N. Vermont / 10-03 S Connecticut

King City, Centre County, MO

Maney Smithson

October 19, 2001

Maney Smithson, P.O. Box 43, St. Joseph, MO

Dated: Interior view - tops of windows

Encl

#7



10:51:01

Open Hole Block

101-03 W Vermont / 101-03 S Connecticut

King City, Coentry County, Mo

Nancy Sundeck

October 11, 2011

Nancy Sundeck, P.O. Box #13 St. Joseph, Mo

Training of Reservoir Arch - 5/11/11

South

H 8



10:51 07

Open Hill Street

101-103 N. Wynn / 101-23-5 Consultant

King City, Carolina Wm. Co

Nancy Sandelin

October 19, 2001

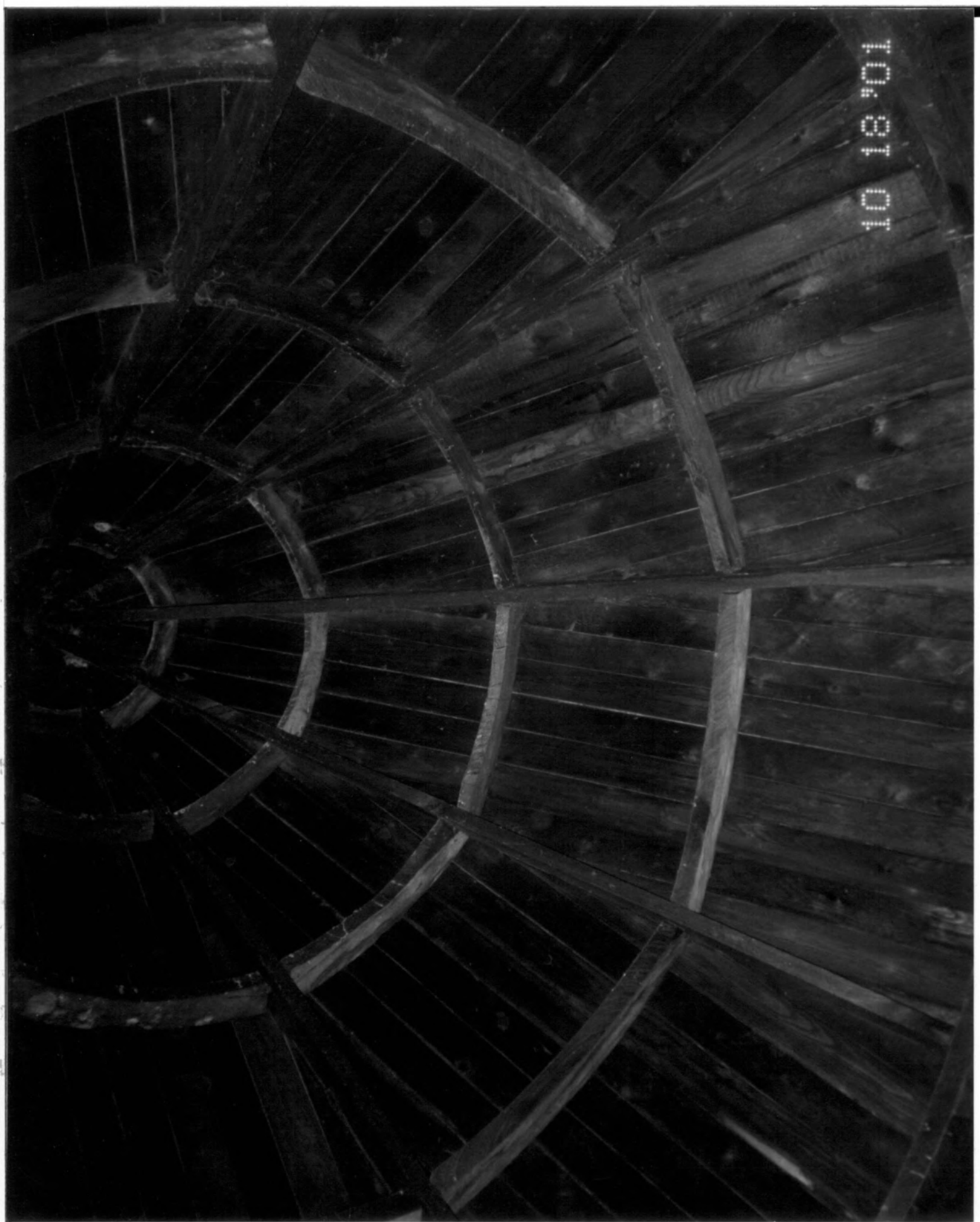
Nancy Sandelin, P.O. Box 43, 511 Soaps, MO

Detail - interior of Orick roof

West

# 9

10 19 50 1



EXTRA  
PHOTOS











