

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name The Shell Building  
Other names/site number Shell Corner  
Name of related Multiple Property Listing n/a

## 2. Location

Street & number <u>1221 Locust Street</u>	<u>n/a</u>	not for publication
City or town <u>St. Louis</u>	<u>n/a</u>	vicinity
State <u>Missouri</u> Code <u>MO</u> County <u>St. Louis (Independent City)</u> Code <u>510</u> Zip code <u>63103</u>		

## 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Toni M. Prawl 04/16/15  
Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph. D., Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

The Shell Building  
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE GOTHIC REVIVAL

ART DECO

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GRANITE, REINFORCED

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: CUT LIMESTONE, GLASS

roof: COMPOSITE

other: \_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

The Shell Building  
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

**Areas of Significance**

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1926-1940

**Significant Dates**

1926

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Jamieson & Spearl, Architects

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.630867° -90.198497° 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jeremy Clagett/Project Manager (Primary Author) with Christina Clagett (Research, editing)

organization Space, LLC date December 22, 2014

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city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63110

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

The Shell Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: **The Shell Building**

City or Vicinity: **St. Louis**

County: **St. Louis (Ind. City)** State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Christina Clagett**

Date

Photographed: **August 16, October 30 and December 8, 2014**

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

- 1 of 22: View of The Shell Building looking southeast from Lucas Garden Park
- 2 of 22: View of The Shell Building looking east from intersection of Locust and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets
- 3 of 22: View of The Shell Building looking northeast from Central Library
- 4 of 22: Detail of corner entrance at Locust and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets looking northeast
- 5 of 22: Detail of roof tower and brand signage elements at corner of Locust and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets looking northeast
- 6 of 22: View of the Shell Building within neighboring context from Soldier's Memorial along Olive Blvd. Looking northeast
- 7 of 22: View of the Shell Building looking northeast on Locust Street. Connecting to Hotel Jefferson (NRHP 9/05/2003) and across Locust from Christ Church Cathedral (NHL 10/17/1994)
- 8 of 22: Detail of main entrance on Locust Street Elevation
- 9 of 22: Detail of main entrance and ground level connection to Hotel Jefferson on Locust Street Elevation looking north
- 10 of 22: Detail of stone work at the main entrance looking north
- 11 of 22: View of The Shell Building within neighboring context from Tucker Avenue looking northwest
- 12 of 22: View of The Shell Building within neighboring context from intersection of Tucker Avenue and Olive Blvd. looking northwest
- 13 of 22: View of The Shell Building within neighboring context from 13<sup>th</sup> Street looking southeast
- 14 of 22: View of the main entrance and lobby from elevators looking south
- 15 of 22: View of east lobby at elevators looking north from main entrance
- 16 of 22: View of lobby from Locust Street side looking east towards reception area
- 17 of 22: View of lobby from Locust Street side looking northwest towards corner entrance at intersection of 13<sup>th</sup> and Locust Streets
- 18 of 22: Detail of window along Locust Street, opposite Christ Church Cathedral looking south
- 19 of 22: View of a typical elevator lobby, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor looking south
- 20 of 22: View of a typical corridor, 10<sup>th</sup> floor looking west
- 21 of 22: View of office space along 13<sup>th</sup> Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor looking south
- 22 of 22: View of the main interior stair as it hits lobby looking northwest

The Shell Building

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## Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. Artist rendering of proposed Shell Building which accompanied construction announcement in magazine, 1925.
2. Image of downtown St. Louis from 1935 picture book. View of buildings from west looking southeast, including The Shell Building.
3. Photograph of The Shell Building from Lucas Garden Park, late 1930s – early 1940s.
4. Photograph of elevator lobby looking south toward main entrance, late 1930s – early 1940s.
5. Photograph of “Elevator Girls” in lobby looking northeast, late 1930s – early 1940s.
6. Photograph of elevator lobby looking northwest, late 1930s – early 1940s.
7. Photograph of typical office floor, late 1930s – early 1940s.
8. Main Level Plan and Photo Key
9. Typical Office Floor Plan and Photo Key
10. Roof Plan and Photo Key
11. Area context map and Photo Key
12. Contextual Map with Coordinates
13. 1929 Map of Shell Companies in the United States
14. View of the Southwestern Bell Building looking southwest from corner of Pine and 10<sup>th</sup> St

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The Shell Building
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n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

## Summary

The Shell Building is a twelve-story office building located at 1221 Locust Street, on a curved corner site in downtown St. Louis (Ind. City), Missouri (see photographs 1-3 and boundary map). It began service as a commercial office building on January 1, 1926 and corporate headquarters for (what would soon be called) The Shell Petroleum Corporation, the American Mid-Continent subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell. The building encompasses approximately 112,000 square feet of interior space. The design of the building is one of the first major examples of Art Deco in St. Louis, and in this case is combined with Late Gothic Revival elements. The building is designed to the property setback line, resulting in one continuous formal elevation which rounds the corner from 13th Street to Locust, straightening along each street and terminating at tower-like returns. The building has two entrances off Locust Street; one facing the St. Louis Public Library at the intersection with 13th Street, and another eastern entrance connected to the elevator lobby continuing the cross-axis of adjacent Christ Church Cathedral. The first floor lobby and retail spaces are characterized by large, pointed-arch windows. The primary building structure is reinforced concrete, and the facade materials are cut limestone and glass, with granite cladding at the base and accentuating the first floor's large arcade windows. Structural elements on the major facade are pulled forward to express verticality, ultimately culminating in the central tower element. The rhythm of the facade, when combined with tall windows, references the ribbed pattern of a seashell. Ornamental details on the ground level and top of the building reference corporate branding, primarily through the use of sculpted seashell accents and the original illuminated "Shell" signage on the tower (see photographs 4-5). Limestone returns and informal brick masonry make up the minor elevations (see photograph 13). Features include large window openings throughout, bronze front doors (see photograph 9) and ground level window frames, vaulted ceilings in the elevator lobby (Figures 5, 6) and brass hardware throughout (see photographs 14-18), marble walls and terrazzo flooring (see photo 19). The exterior and public spaces maintain integrity, while the office spaces have been renovated numerous times over the years.

## Setting

The Shell Building is part of an exceptional composition of historic revival style buildings that overlook Lucas Park in the western portion of downtown St. Louis. The Shell Building shares the block east of Lucas Park with the Classical Revival Jefferson Hotel (1904, NRHP 9/05/2003), whose main building anchors the block to the east and northeast. The massing and openings of the Jefferson Hotel and Shell Building share a direct relationship, aligning horizontally and rhythmically on the exterior to create a cohesive urban block, although no interior connection exists between buildings. An Art Deco influenced parking garage (NRHP 9/05/2003) was added for the Jefferson Hotel in 1928, and sits across the alley from the Shell Building, to its north. To the southwest, on

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the opposite corner from one of the Shell Building's entrances sits the Italian Revival Central Library (Cass Gilbert, 1912). Across Locust and to the south sits the Christ Church Cathedral (1867, NHL 10/17/1994), whose Gothic Revival design informs the Shell Building, especially at ground level where pointed arch windows culminate in the lobby entrance on the cross-axis of the church. To the Shell Building's southeast is the Bishop Tuttle Memorial Building (NRHP 3/07/90), a 1928 Late Gothic Revival addition to the east side of the Christ Church Cathedral that was also designed by Shell Building Architects, Jamieson & Spearl. A block and a half to the north of the Shell Building sits the former wholesale district along Washington Avenue (NRHP 2/12/1987). This district was reborn beginning in the late 1990's and currently acts as a residential loft district and spine of downtown St. Louis nightlife in the early 21st century.

**Exterior**

The primary elevation of the Shell Building is a continuous composition of approximately 140 feet in length which wraps the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Locust, upon which it straightens. This major elevation is comprised of cut limestone and is divided into ten bays divided by vertically articulated structural members, beginning on the western facade and wrapping a gentle curve that becomes the building's southern facade (see photographs 3, 7). These vertically articulated structural elements give the major elevation a rhythm that subtly references the ribbed pattern of a seashell. These bays each contain three fixed windows with limestone sills, and are equal in size and style, with the exception of those symmetrically delineating the west entrance and tower. These unique bays, the third and fifth bays when counting from left to right, contain an additional column which further divides the bay into a two window section and a one window section, each framed by two closely spaced vertical structural elements that terminate vertically as a part of the crenulation.

The base of the major building elevation rests at ground level, and functionally consists of lobby and retail spaces. Each bay of the facade's base is articulated with original pointed-arch windows extending almost the full height of the tall interior lobby and retail spaces. These large, Gothic inspired windows each have a sill clad in dark granite (sometimes punctuated by doors) and feature pointed arched transoms with etched seashells (see photographs 4, 18). Besides the ground floor window openings and limestone clad pier undulations inherent in the ribbed articulation, the facade is largely clean and smooth; modern in character. A modest stone cornice visually separates the base from the rest of the building, although there is no change in material. The strategic use of ornament on the base of the Shell Building is reserved for the two entrances: a prominent single seashell sits atop the pointed arch at the western tower entrance. A composition of six smaller seashells (see photograph 10) ornaments the east entrance while framing etched "Shell Building" lettering (see photographs 4, 9). This east entrance retains its historic bronze doors and brass hardware (see photograph 14), aligned on the cross-axis of the Christ Church Cathedral. This entrance leads into the



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elevator lobby, where the Gothic is again recalled with pointed arches and groin vaults in the ceiling (see photographs 14, 15).

The middle section of the major building elevation functionally consists of office space and expresses the building's verticality. Large expanses of glass occupy the negative space in between the prominently expressed structural frame of the building. These window openings currently have fixed, single light thermal windows and cut stone sashes, unlike the original double hung operable windows (Figure 3). These curving windows are interrupted by vertical piers that protrude slightly from the building, articulating each bay as they extend the full height of the building, and beyond the roof to create the building's parapet. In composition, they reinforce a sense of vertical movement alluding to the ribs in a seashell, and culminating as a tower element. The ornament and Gothic elements at the building's base are echoed above the top floor windows, each adorned with a stone seashell framed by a pointed arch (see photograph 5). The termination of the facade's articulation is the tower itself, punctuated by the prominent "Shell" signage. The tower's prominence is reinforced by several ornamental notches, subtly alluding to a crown, and highlighted by the parapet wall's descent in height and mass as it falls symmetrically away from the tower. The tower itself displays original illuminated "Shell" signage, continuing to physically broadcast the original brand to the outside world (see photograph 5).

The rear elevations of the Shell Building are well-hidden by the Jefferson Hotel complex and accessible to 13th St. via a narrow alley. There are two north facing facades on the rear with a small east facing connector facade. The reinforced concrete structure is visible on the rear facades with large expanses of ribbon windows and brick masonry of yellow and brown used to infill the structural frame. The building's ground floor service spaces occur at the back of the building, so access for deliveries and maintenance is provided from the alley. There are remnants of a removed exterior lift system on the rear walls. Of particular note is the connection to the more formal front facades using a faux tower of cut limestone at the northwest corner; a testament to the thoughtfulness of the architects by reacting sensitively to the surrounding context. Although it is common to return a front elevation material to a minor elevation to avoid abrupt changes in materiality, the designers in this case used the limestone return as an opportunity to speak to the form of the existing Christ Church Cathedral Tower across Locust (see photograph 13, figure 8). This exercise in massing is similar to the strategy that Jamieson & Spearl would use two years later in their design for the addition to the Christ Church Cathedral (see photograph 11).

### Interior

The building has a full basement, primarily used for building service and storage and is constructed of reinforced concrete. An electrical room sits at grade and is accessible from the alley. It contains electrical equipment which also serves surrounding buildings.

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The first floor includes a large, brightly day lit double height lobby space that curves along Locust Street, connecting the Shell Building's two entrances (see photographs 16, 17). In its current configuration, the lobby runs parallel to the sidewalk, with the large Gothic inspired windows framing views of the exterior cathedral, park and library while the lobby itself provides access to the various restaurant and commercial spaces that stair-step along its back wall. These various retail spaces begin at the northeast edge of the building and extend to the edge of the elevator lobby. This elevator lobby is directly connected to the east entrance (see photograph 14) and sits along the cross-axis of the Christ Church Cathedral. Although the Shell Building abuts the Jefferson Hotel to the east, there is no interior connection between buildings (Figure 8). The elevator lobby is also the access point for the main stair (see photograph 22) and restrooms to the north, and as such acts as the primary circulation space in the building. Unlike the remainder of the ground floor interior, it maintains much of its historic character, and is distinguished by original groin vaults (see photograph 14) and Shell ornament above the three elevator doors (see photograph 15). The east entry and air lock vestibule are made of bronze and there is currently a reception desk just inside and to the right of the east entrance.

The remaining current ground floor spaces and materials are largely the result of the 1980 renovation. To provide accessibility to the entire ground floor, new ceramic flooring was installed, including a sloped portion of floor connecting each vestibule. Fluted wood column wraps, planar ceiling elements and lighting were installed as part of this renovation.

The second through twelfth floors have had various office configurations over the years, ranging originally from open office (see Figure 7 and photograph 21) to heavily compartmentalized after the 1980s renovation. Office partitions and non-structural walls have been added and removed on several occasions and there are remains of various configurations throughout. While a few single tenant floors exist, the most common current configuration is a double-loaded L-Shaped corridor connecting the front stair and elevator lobby with the back stair. Although office space layout varies by floor, each level maintains a nearly identical elevator lobby (Figure 9), restroom and stair configuration. In many instances, the original elevator trim, hardware, marble walls, and terrazzo floors remain in good condition, although the terrazzo flooring is occasionally concealed by another material.

The composite roof sits concealed behind the large parapet walls. It is accessed from the top penthouse story (Figure 10). The current roof configuration contains a handful of skylights, not original, which let light into the office space directly below. The roof also provides access to the tower, which extends 20 feet in height beyond the roof and includes a small room (Figure 10).

**Integrity**

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The Shell Building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The exterior retains the original cut limestone cladding, is in good condition and has only minor modifications from the period of significance. Only cosmetic elements like awnings, flags and lighting have been attached to the original structure. The replacement of the windows in 1981 with thermal windows does not detract from integrity, although the new fixed windows lack the original fenestration pattern.

In addition to the exterior, the ground floor elevator lobby and stairs (See Photograph 22) maintain integrity. Elevator lobbies at each floor retain varying levels of original character and materials. The spatial configuration and materials of these elevator lobby spaces remain largely intact, although there are exceptions which include replacement flooring, ceiling treatment and door openings. The typical office floors have been gutted and refurbished multiple times, as recently as 1981. That renovation, designed by building tenant Burks Associates Architects, revised corridors and office floors with various tenant specific layouts; sometimes relatively open, often compartmentalized. The main lobby was also altered in 1981, including the retail configuration, changes in floor material and a sloping portion of flooring to accommodate accessibility. Ground floor lobby finishes also were modified in this renovation, including column cladding, ceiling treatments and lighting. Some of these alterations were necessitated by maintenance and others brought elements closer to their original configuration. Despite interior alterations, the building retains integrity and conveys significance.

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The Shell Building
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### Summary

The Shell Building is located at 1221 Locust Street in downtown St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri. The building is locally significant under Criterion A for COMMERCE and under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE. Designed by prominent St. Louis architectural firm Jamieson & Spearl, the twelve story building opened on January 1, 1926 as the corporate headquarters for Roxana Petroleum Company (known as The Shell Petroleum Corporation after 1928). The building is a lasting connection to one of the most promising times in St. Louis commercial history, the period from the 1920s to the Second World War. The building associates St. Louis with the rise of the petroleum industry, to which global commerce continues to be dependent. The design of the building is one of the first examples of Art Deco in St. Louis; incorporating Gothic Revival elements among strategic commercial ornament to enhance its presence and harmonize with surroundings. The Shell Building is bonded to its rich urban context by its design, physically embracing a curved corner site as well as weaving characteristics and organization of surrounding revival style buildings. During its period of significance from 1926-1940, The Shell Building was among notable buildings in downtown St. Louis for style and modern construction techniques.

### Introduction: Royal Dutch Shell, Globally and Nationally

Royal Dutch Shell, parent company of Shell Oil Company (United States), remains one of the largest companies in the world. Modern civilization still depends on the oil industry, and this company has remained one of the most powerful for decades, all while enduring many economic cycles and world events. Royal Dutch Shell rose to global prominence in the early 1900s, as worldwide production of crude oil increased along with the proliferation of the personal automobile and other petroleum products. Their United States operations initially ran through two separate subsidiaries, one on the West Coast and the other in the Mid-Continent. These two subsidiaries would later combine to form Shell Oil Company, the current United States subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell. They operated independently of one another from 1912 until the late 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Each built a monumental headquarters during that time to facilitate growth and convey corporate power. One of those is The Shell Building in St. Louis, Missouri.

### Background: St. Louis and the Rise of Shell Oil Co.

In 1907, Royal Dutch Shell was formed by combining Royal Dutch Petroleum Company and the "Shell" Transport and Trading Company, Ltd. of the United Kingdom. It was a move of desperation for two rival businesses trying to compete with industry leader, The Standard Oil Company.<sup>2</sup> The new company grew quickly and after establishing itself as a major firm in the Far East, Royal Dutch Shell entered the American market with two separate corporate entities in 1912: Shell Oil Company of California, Inc. covering the west coast and Roxana Petroleum Company in the Mid-Continent (all US territory east of The Rocky Mountains).<sup>3</sup> The headquarters for each were located in San Francisco, California and Tulsa, Oklahoma respectively. Originally, Roxana planned to connect the oil fields in Oklahoma to the Gulf Coast via a pipeline, but those plans never materialized. Instead, a

<sup>1</sup> Williamson, Harold F., *The American Petroleum Industry. Volume 2: The Age of Energy 1899-1959*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959. p. 100-101.

<sup>2</sup> Aftalion, Fred. *A History of the International Chemical Industry*. The Chemical Heritage Foundation. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001. p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> Williamson, p. 100-101.

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new refinery site was chosen at Wood River, IL, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. Construction on the refinery began in 1917.<sup>4</sup>

Both American divisions of Royal Dutch Shell (Shell Oil Company of California and Roxana Petroleum Company) grew rapidly throughout the 1910s. In order to sustain its growth, it was decided in 1919 that the Tulsa head office for Roxana Petroleum Company would be relocated. St. Louis was chosen for the new head office because of its prominence as a major American city, central location to the market and refinery, as well as facilitating numerous railway connections. With the need to cover the eastern United States, St. Louis was the ideal location for a new major corporate headquarters (Figure 13).<sup>5</sup>

The St. Louis office was first housed on the fourteenth floor of the Arcade Building (NRHP 3/23/03) at 810 Olive Street.<sup>6</sup> The staff of Roxana Petroleum Company grew immensely in the 1920s, creating overcrowding and a need for more office space. E. C. Peet of the St. Louis office, later to become chief fiscal officer of Royal Dutch Shell, recalled "the year 1923 was the start of six years of phenomenal growth".<sup>7</sup> That year the company expanded to doing business in fourteen states within the Midwest.<sup>8</sup> Late in 1924, the company decided to alleviate its growing pains by constructing its own twelve-story corporate headquarters building. A desirable corner was purchased at the intersection of 13th and Locust Streets (Figures 3, 11, 12), facing Lucas Park and St. Louis architecture firm Jamieson & Spearl developed a design for the building in 1925 (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> They were neighbors of Roxana Petroleum Company in the Arcade Building and were already highly regarded for collegiate buildings, including many still-prominent buildings on the campus of Washington University St. Louis.<sup>10</sup> The Shell Building of St. Louis cost approximately \$1,140,000 to construct<sup>11</sup> and Roxana Petroleum Corporation moved into their new headquarters on January 1, 1926. It was called "The Shell Building," or more popularly at the time, "Shell Corner." The new headquarters told the world that Shell was a powerful brand in the American oil industry and one of the country's great industrial enterprises. They achieved this feat within twenty years of entering the American market as an unknown.<sup>12</sup>

### Commercial History: The Shell Building St. Louis as Corporate Headquarters for The Shell Petroleum Corporation, 1926 - 1940

After a short time in their new headquarters at "Shell Corner," Roxana Petroleum Corporation was renamed Shell Petroleum Corporation in 1928. During the period of significance, The Shell Building was home to the Executive Offices, the Aviation Department, and the Marketing Division, among others. The Shell Building housed the management center for Mid-Continent refineries, oil fields, and pipelines - directing over 20,000 employees at the pre-depression peak in 1929 (Figure 13).<sup>13</sup> One highlight during the 1930s was the phenomenally successful marketing campaign of 1933,

<sup>4</sup> Williamson, p. 100-101.

<sup>5</sup> Beaton, Kendall. *Enterprise in Oil: A History of Shell in the United States*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957. p 169.

<sup>6</sup> Beaton, p. 170.

<sup>7</sup> Beaton, p. 100-101.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> City of St. Louis Building Permit Records: St. Louis: City Hall, Records Retention Division, Office of the Comptroller.

<sup>10</sup> *Who was Who In America, 1943-1950*. American Institute of Architects: January, 1945. p. 564.

<sup>11</sup> Beaton, p. 350.

<sup>12</sup> Beaton, p. 351

<sup>13</sup> Beaton, p. 369.

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“Shell’s New Deal,” or “New Super-Shell,” conceived by the Marketing Bureau in St. Louis. The campaign used innovative “teaser” ads to build anticipation and was successful enough to significantly combat Depression Era losses. It marked a turning point in nation-wide marketing strategy for the company.<sup>14</sup> Marketing department staff would later be the last Shell employees to work in The Shell Building St. Louis, staying twenty years beyond other departments.<sup>15</sup> From 1930 to 1940, Lt. Jimmy Doolittle of The United States Air Force held a management position at Shell; coordinating all aviation activities for all Royal Dutch Shell subsidiaries in the United States from his office in The Shell Building in St. Louis. In addition to growing Shell’s aviation clientele significantly, Doolittle is more importantly responsible for persuading the Shell Oil Company to produce higher performance “100 Octane” fuel; crucial to the high-performance planes that were developed in the late 1930s and later depended on by the United States Air Force in World War II.<sup>16</sup>

The onset of the Great Depression marked the end of Royal Dutch Shell’s initial growth spurt in the United States market of the early twentieth century. The 1930s were a time of hardship marked by depression, deficit, and increased competition. The Mid-Continent organization headquartered in The Shell Building of St. Louis overtook The Shell Company of California in crude production steadily during the 1920s and 30s, eventually leading by a factor of 2:1 by 1940. In doing so, they became was the dominant player in company affairs.<sup>17</sup> But by the late 1930s, major streamlining and corporate simplification was occurring within all the Royal Dutch Shell Companies.<sup>18</sup> The biggest move in the consolidation of the Shell operating companies was the merger of Shell Oil Company of California in San Francisco and the Shell Petroleum Corporation in St. Louis, becoming The Shell Oil Company, Incorporated in March 1939. In a moment that mirrored events of twenty years earlier, company leadership mulled a corporate headquarters shift, and by April 1940, the move from St. Louis to New York was officially announced. After Shell abandoned many markets between the Rocky Mountains and St. Louis, the city was considered too western an edge for its marketing area. New York was gaining prominence as a head office city and was in closer proximity to associates. Thus 1940 is considered the end of the period of significance for the nominated property. A Shell placement bureau remained and helped find new employment for 90% of the 300 St. Louisans terminated in the consolidation<sup>19</sup>. Only the marketing division would remain in the Shell Building St. Louis, and they too would vacate their offices in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup>

The Shell Petroleum Company, one of two American divisions of Royal Dutch Shell, called St. Louis headquarters for two decades. By the time they moved on to New York, the company had annual sales surpassing \$9,000,000.<sup>21</sup> They had commissioned a monument to their business, which they ended up occupying for only fifteen years. However, this building still holds on proudly to the brand that erected it, exhibiting most of the original Shell ornament, and still broadcasting its name.

<sup>14</sup> Beaton, p. 415.

<sup>15</sup> Beaton, p. 450.

<sup>16</sup> Beaton, p. 636.

<sup>17</sup> Beaton, p. 500.

<sup>18</sup> Beaton, p. 494-5.

<sup>19</sup> Beaton, p. 496

<sup>20</sup> Beaton, p. 500.

<sup>21</sup> Beaton, p. 170.

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**Architecture: The Shell Building - An Early Example of Art Deco with Strong Corporate Identity**

The Shell Building is distinctive not only for a short window in American commercial history, but also as an example of a corporate headquarters with strong brand identity integrated into its architecture, and predates both of New York City's Art Deco "Cathedrals of Commerce," the Chrysler Building (1930, NHL 12/8/1976) and Empire State Building (1931, NHL 1986).<sup>22</sup>

The first clear manifestation of Art Deco occurred at the Paris Exhibition of 1925<sup>23</sup>, the same year the Shell Building was under construction. The Shell Building has references to its Gothic Revival neighbor across the street, the Christ Church Cathedral, but relates more to modern architecture in character. The design exhibits multiple characteristics of the still blossoming Art Deco style in addition to the juxtaposition of gothic and stark, streamlined elements. Art Deco is exhibited by setback terraced silhouettes at the roof, corporate brand ornament, and the geometric pulling of structural elements to express verticality, coupled with the use of modern technologies like reinforced concrete, cut limestone panels, and large expanses of glass.<sup>24</sup>

The desirable site at the corner of 13th and Locust Streets was already characterized by the prominent surrounding revival style buildings, which set the context in which it had to exist. The site was chosen by the client along the open plaza where a modest and soon to be demolished retail building with a large billboard had stood. The parcel held a commanding position, guaranteeing that the building could be seen from an impressive distance, with the tower incorporated to further distinguish the structure.<sup>25</sup> Directly to the south is the ornately detailed Gothic Revival Christ Church Cathedral (1867; NRHP 3/07/90; NHL 10/12/94).<sup>26</sup> Located to the southwest is the Italian Revival Central Library by Cass Gilbert (1912).<sup>27</sup> Most of The Shell Building's block belongs to the Classical Revival Jefferson Hotel (1904; NRHP 10/24/2003). The revival style was especially popular in St. Louis around the turn of the twentieth century when these surrounding buildings were constructed. Additionally, the prominent Chicago style in warehouse and commercial building design was popular in downtown St. Louis, including in the Washington Avenue Historic District (NRHP 2/12/87), one block to the north of The Shell Building. A majority of early-twentieth-century commercial architecture was comprised of a Traditionalist cladding over newer building types and structural systems.<sup>28</sup> However, new styles began to emerge after the First World War, when new technologies and techniques emerged and allowed for design possibilities to be explored. A primary example, reinforced concrete was developed and could help support heavier facades<sup>29</sup> and larger window openings, all with the inherent fire protection properties of concrete. The Shell Building would incorporate reinforced concrete, large expanses of glazing and even modern conveniences like high speed elevators and air conditioning.

<sup>22</sup> Beaton, p. 170.

<sup>23</sup> Hyman, Isabelle and Trachtenberg, Marvin. *Architecture: From Prehistory to Modernity. Second Edition.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002. p. 526.

<sup>24</sup> Bayer, Patricia. *Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration and Detail From the Twenties and Thirties.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992. p. 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> "Plans Completed for New Building of Roxana Corporation." *The Greater St. Louis Magazine.* February 1925. p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> Oestreich, Kenneth D. *Historic St. Louis: An Architectural Survey of the Central Business District.* St. Louis: Prepared for the City of Saint Louis Community Development Agency, 1977. p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Oestreich, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Hyman, p. 526.

<sup>29</sup> Bayer, Patricia. p. 7-8.

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The Shell Building is part of a new class of commercial St. Louis architecture that blossomed from the late 1920s to early 1930s, just before construction in downtown St. Louis slowed for several decades. The Southwestern Bell Telephone Company also erected a corporate headquarters, located a few blocks to the southeast of The Shell Building (Figure 14). It was also constructed in 1925<sup>30</sup> and illustrates what a promising, albeit short-lived, time this was in St. Louis commercial history (see Figure 2, center right).<sup>31</sup> The 28-story building is much grander in scale, but has much in common technologically and stylistically with The Shell Building. Both buildings utilized reinforced concrete construction to support heavy cut limestone facades and feature a large proportion of glazing<sup>32</sup>. Although it is widely characterized as a Gothic skyscraper, it includes many Art Deco characteristics including large stepping setbacks, and like The Shell Building, vertical piers and notching to emphasize height.<sup>33</sup> Their language was something new to St. Louis, putting them in stark contrast to other traditional revival buildings that continued to be constructed for decades. For example, three blocks to the west, the Downtown YMCA Building (NRHP May 14, 2014) opened the same year as The Shell Building. It was also designed by a prominent local architecture firm, LaBeaume and Klein, who embraced the traditional Italian Revival style. The Shell Building would have more in common with future buildings such as the aforementioned New York City Art Deco skyscrapers. However, similar features are visible one block south in another corporate headquarters, The Missouri Pacific Building (see Figure 2, far right), constructed in 1928. The 23-story Art Deco Building shares a similar cut limestone facade, vertical piers defining repetitive bays, as well as notching elements at the roof.<sup>34</sup> While the Southwestern Bell Building and Missouri Pacific Buildings include massive setbacks due to their large size, the more compact Shell Building is set apart by utilizing a delicate and less abrupt delineation. Additional local Art Deco Buildings which followed were the Robert A. Young Federal Building in downtown (1933) and the grandest St. Louis example of Art Deco Architecture, William B. Ittner's 22-story Continental Life Building in Midtown (1929), both exhibiting similar stylistic characteristics.<sup>35</sup> Three years after the St. Louis Shell building opened, a 29-story Shell Building was constructed in San Francisco as headquarters of the Shell Oil Company of California, Inc.<sup>36</sup> Although grander in scale and ornament, the building shares the traits of its earlier cousin being an Art Deco building with strong corporate identity.

The unique design of The Shell Building is derived from thoughtful decisions rooting the building in its own place and time. The property embodies a pleasing composition for the 1920s: a combination of Gothic Revival and Art Deco, packaged into a site-specific cohesive solution. The building hugs its curving site boundary (see boundary map, Figure 11), and reacts to its surrounding buildings in a variety of ways. The building's massing and the horizontal banding of the floors and windows harmonizes with that of the adjacent Hotel Jefferson, aligning horizontally to create a visually unified urban block. Additionally, The Shell Building deliberately references Christ Church Cathedral across the street, both in its pointed-arch windows at the base and top of the building, and in the interior

<sup>30</sup> McCue, George, and Peters, Frank. St. Louis Chapter, American Institute of Architects. "A Guide to the Architecture of St. Louis." Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989. Pg. 41.

<sup>31</sup> St. Louis Views: An Artistic and Unusual Selection of Pictures Showing Some of Saint Louis' Outstanding Places of Interest. St. Louis, MO: Shelley Printing Company, 1935.

<sup>32</sup> Oestreich, p. 92.

<sup>33</sup> Danna, Doris Andrews editor. *A Guide to the Architecture of St. Louis*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989. p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> Oestreich, p. 127.

<sup>35</sup> Danna, p. 64

<sup>36</sup> Beaton, p. 350.



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groin vaults of the ground floor elevator lobby (Figure 4). This elevator lobby and associated entrance share an axial relationship with the Christ Church Cathedral. The Shell Building references the characteristics of Gothic Revival elements, which keep it in harmony with its neighbors, but the overall composition is lighter in feeling.

The Shell Building exhibits many characteristics of 1920s design in general, and Art Deco specifically. Art Deco light fixtures and hardware can be found on both the interior and exterior (see photos 9, 14). The facade plays up of the building's reinforced concrete structural system, and spatial delineation: the modern structural system enables generous windows able to largely wrap the curving facade, providing daylight deep into the open office floor plates. Regulating the spacing of these windows are the structural bays of the curving facade, ultimately clad in limestone. Their collective composition accentuates the building's verticality, and the resulting rhythm of the facade provides a sophisticated reference to seashells, which combined with the literal Shell ornament and detailing, elicits a strong corporate identity.

The Art Deco Shell-branded roof tower was designed to be commanding from afar as the building was a showpiece of industry. The facade's vertical piers extend beyond the top of the roof, creating a parapet composition which wraps the curved building, notching toward the central tower element like a crown. Although the materials and articulation are generally simple and stark, the restrained flourishes and accents all reinforce the corporate Shell brand.

Although the building has some historical references, it was current in design and amenities for the 1920s. This combination of the historic and the current, coupled with its contextual qualities, demonstrates a high degree of artistic value which still resonates.

### The Architects: Jamieson & Spearl

James P. Jamieson was an immigrant from Scotland who studied architecture in Great Britain. After immigrating to the United States, he worked for various architecture firms as a draftsman before joining the Philadelphia architectural firm Cope & Stewardson in 1889 as a draftsman. He would later become a partner in 1902. James Jamieson played an instrumental role for his firm in the construction of twelve buildings on the campus of Washington University St. Louis from 1901-1907, including centerpiece Brookings Hall.<sup>37</sup> In 1912 he opened his own permanent practice in St. Louis, and was joined in 1918 by George Spearl, a younger colleague from Cope & Stewardson.

The firm of Jamieson & Spearl is regarded in St. Louis and nationally as distinguished and prolific collegiate designers, responsible for thirteen buildings (in addition to those of Cope & Stewardson) on the main campus of Washington University St. Louis (1920-1935), as well as work at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, University of Arkansas, and Berea College, among others.<sup>38</sup> James Jamieson and his aforementioned firm are also noted for their residential work. Their groundbreaking design for The Shell Building is noted humbly among other credits while being their

<sup>37</sup> " Biography from the American Architects and Buildings database: Jamieson, James P. (1867-1941)

ARCHITECT." Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project. <  
<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/about.cfm>>. Accessed 25 September 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Greenberg, Jan. "Jamieson & Spearl Architects" . General Studies 416. 17 December 1971. Architects' Files Collection of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis. p. 2-6.

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sole endeavor into high rise corporate architecture. They practiced together until 1937, when Jamieson became inactive due to poor health. He passed away in the fall of 1941<sup>39</sup>, living to see the abandonment of the Shell Building by its corporate benefactor. Spearl continued the firm under the name Jamieson, Spearl, Hammond & Grolock until his own death in 1948.<sup>40</sup>

James Jamieson and George Spearl were each active in local professional and civic organizations. They both served a term as AIA (American Institute of Architects) Chapter President and were both Fellows of the AIA. Spearl was once President of the Missouri State Association of Architects, and both had their hand in various other professional clubs.<sup>41</sup>

### Summary

The Shell Building is evidence of St. Louis' connection to the rise of the petroleum industry as well as a reminder of one of the most promising times in St. Louis commercial history, the period from the 1920s to the Second World War. Additionally, it's a groundbreaking and beautiful piece of architecture by a distinguished and prominent St. Louis firm. The building has artistic value: from its clean aesthetic to its deliberate and carefully chosen historic references to its contextual awareness and resulting spatial organization. At various scales, the design of the building is an embodiment of a strong corporate identity, from larger design elements like the pattern and rhythm of the facade, down to its details. The Shell Building is undoubtedly a product of its own place in time and its unique site. The Shell Building is still notable for beauty and elegance to this day. It continues to be used as an office building, and has never been fully vacant. Although it has undergone a few modest renovations, the building still looks much like it appeared in 1926.

<sup>39</sup> "James P. Jamieson Funeral Monday." St. Louis Post-Dispatch. 29 November 1941.

<sup>40</sup> Greenberg, p. 2-6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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"Biography from the American Architects and Buildings database: Jamieson, James P. (1867-1941) ARCHITECT." Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project. <<http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/about.cfm>>. Accessed 25 September 2014

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is located at 1221 Locust Street in St. Louis, Missouri. The building stands on city block 824. The property is legally identified by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 082400030. Legal Description:

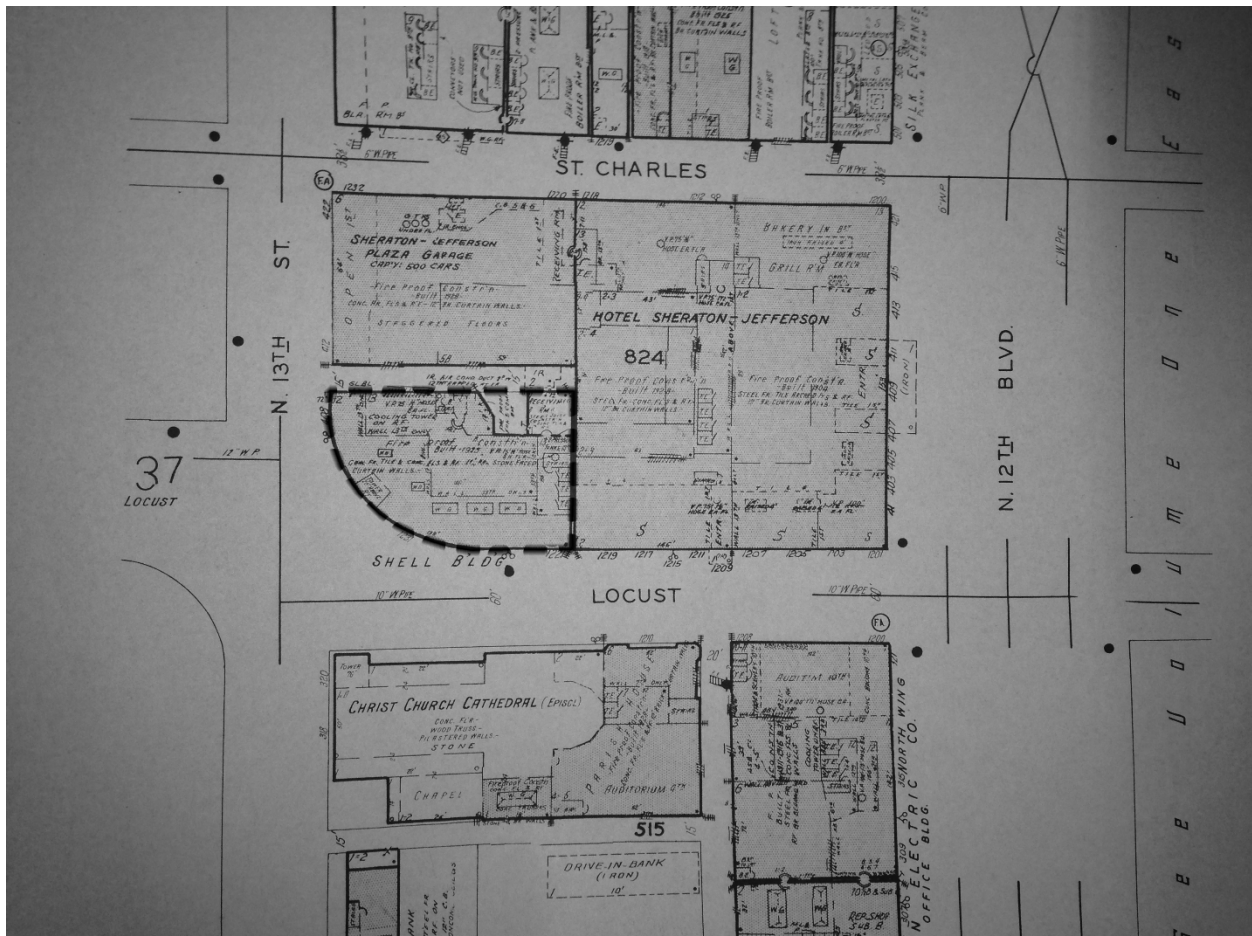
CB 824 Locust  
IRREG/145 FT x 102 FT 10 IN IRREG  
PRIVATE SURVEY BY PITZMAN  
BD W-13<sup>th</sup> ST

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated parcel includes the entire historic site of The Shell Building as indicated by a dash line in map. The Jefferson Hotel Building abuts The Shell Building on its east edge, but has no interior connection.

**The Shell Building boundary map (north facing up).**

Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1945. NTS.



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**Figure 1:** Artist rendering of proposed Shell Building which accompanied construction announcement in magazine, 1925.

**Source:** "Plans Completed for New Building of Roxana Corporation." The Greater St. Louis Magazine. February 1925.



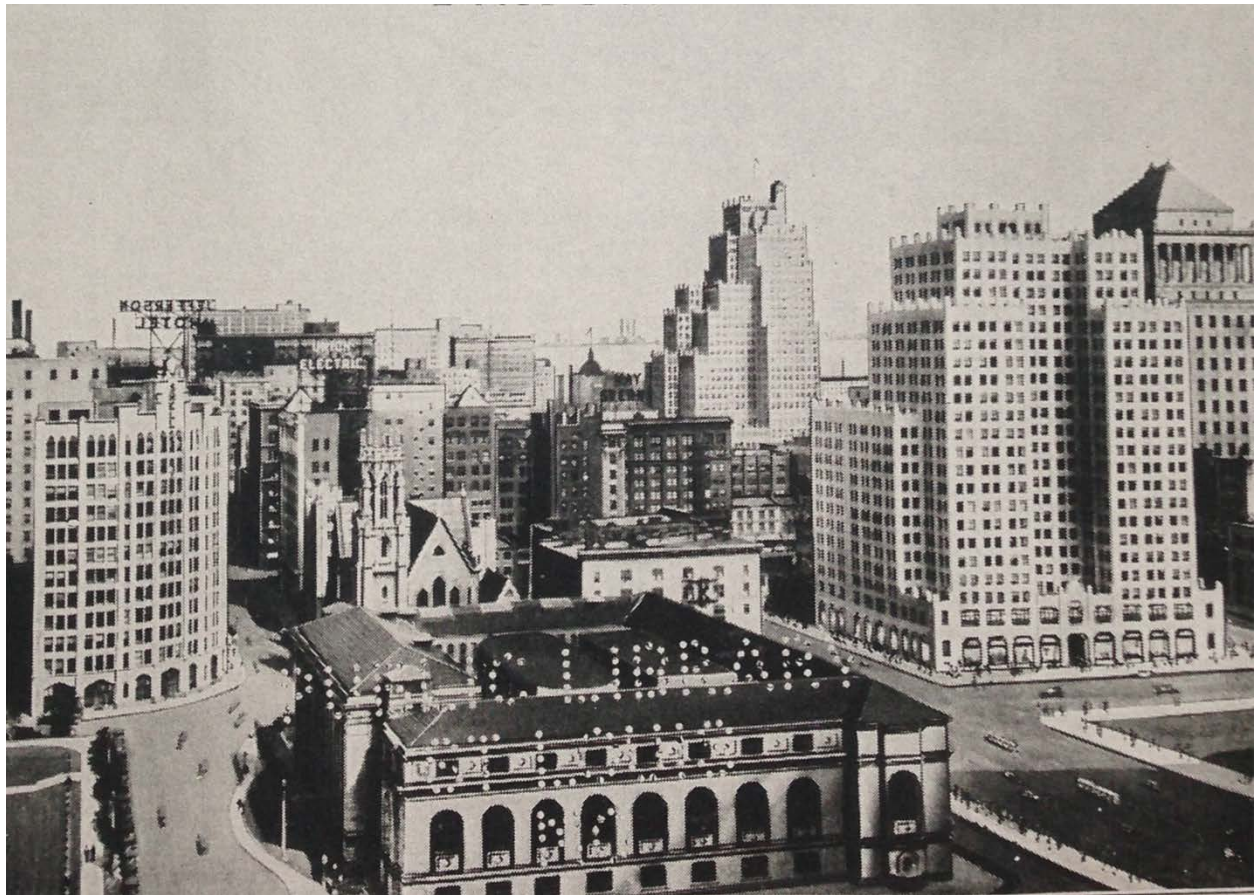
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**Figure 2:** Artist rendering of downtown St. Louis from 1935 picture book. View of buildings from west looking southeast, including The Shell Building (far left).

**Source:** *St. Louis Views: An Artistic and Unusual Selection of Pictures Showing Some of St. Louis' Outstanding Places of Interest.* St. Louis, MO: Shelley Printing Company, 1935.



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**Figure 3:** Photograph of The Shell Building from Lucas Garden Park, late 1930s – early 1940s.

**Source:** Photo from Shell Building Promotional Materials used for recruiting office tenants. Estimated date late 1930s to early 1940s. Courtesy of current building owner's collection.





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**Figure 4:** Photograph of elevator lobby looking south toward main entrance, late 1930s – early 1940s.  
**Source:** Photo from Shell Building Promotional Materials used for recruiting office tenants. Estimated date late 1930s to early 1940s. Courtesy of current building owner's collection.



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**Figure 5:** Photograph of “Elevator Girls” in lobby looking northeast, late 1930s – mid 1940s.

**Source:** Photo from Shell Building Promotional Materials used for recruiting office tenants. Estimated date late 1930s to early 1940s. Courtesy of current building owner’s collection.



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**Figure 6:** Photograph of elevator lobby looking northwest, late 1930s – mid 1940s.  
**Source:** Photo from Shell Building Promotional Materials used for recruiting office tenants. Estimated date late 1930s to early 1940s. Courtesy of current building owner's collection.



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**Figure 7:** Photograph of typical office floor, late 1930s – mid 1940s.

**Source:** Photo from Shell Building Promotional Materials used for recruiting office tenants. Estimated date late 1930s to early 1940s. Courtesy of current building owner's collection.

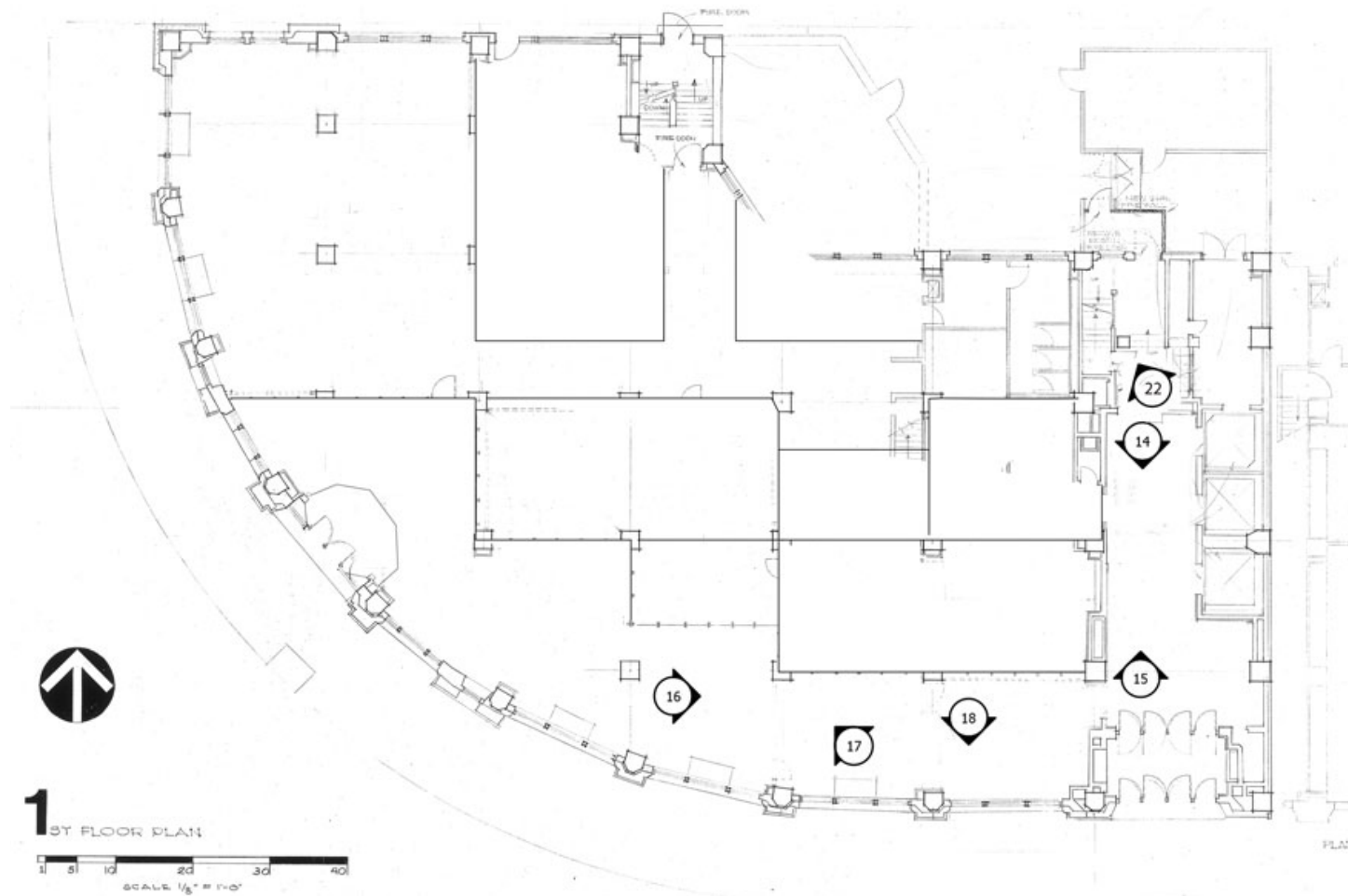


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**Figure 8:** Main Level Plan and Photo Key  
**Source:** Building owner collection, plan circa 1980 by Burks Associates with overlay indicating current layout by Christina Clagett.

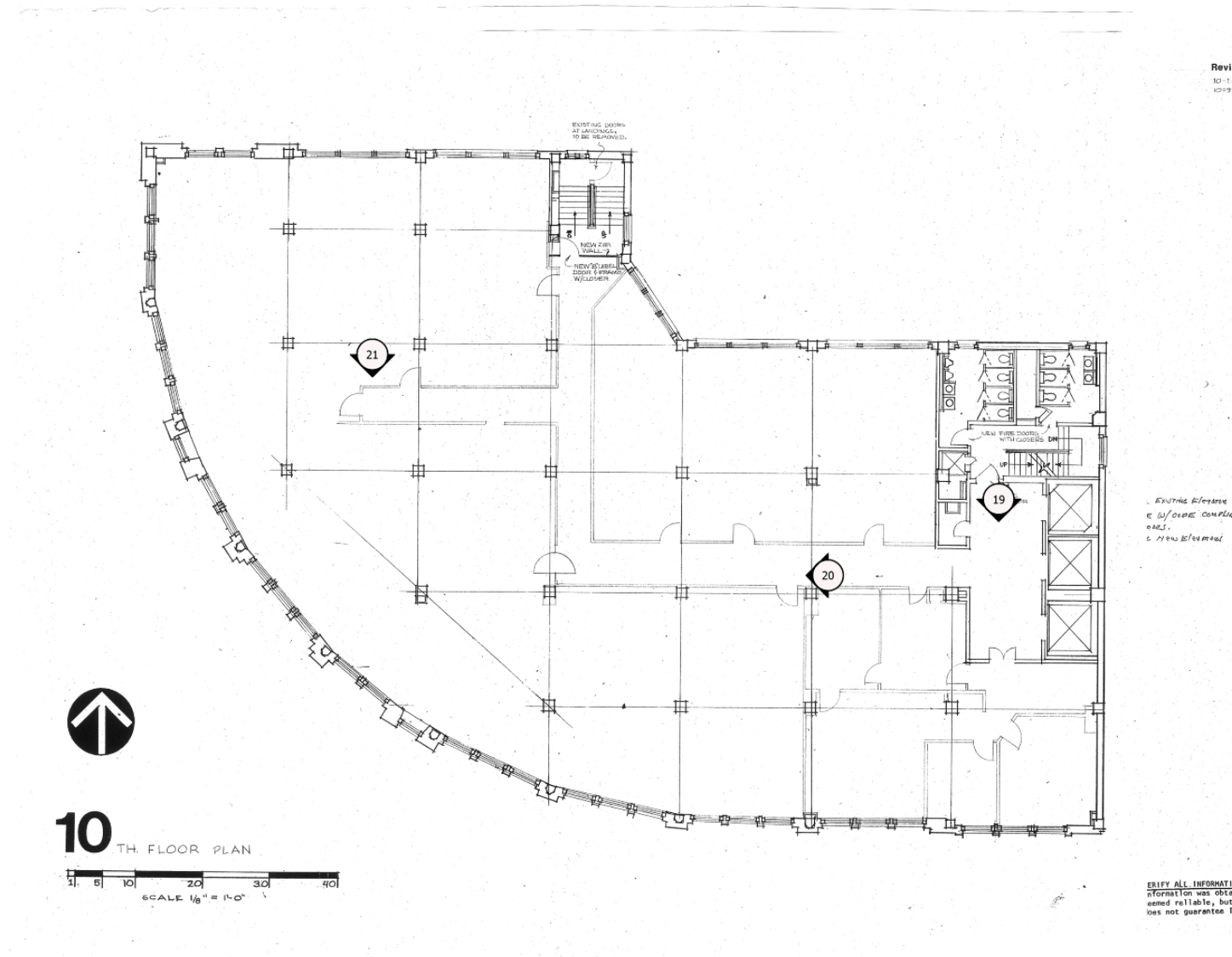


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**Figure 9:** Typical Office Floor Plan and Photo Key  
**Source:** Building owner collection, drawing circa 1980 by Burks Associates.



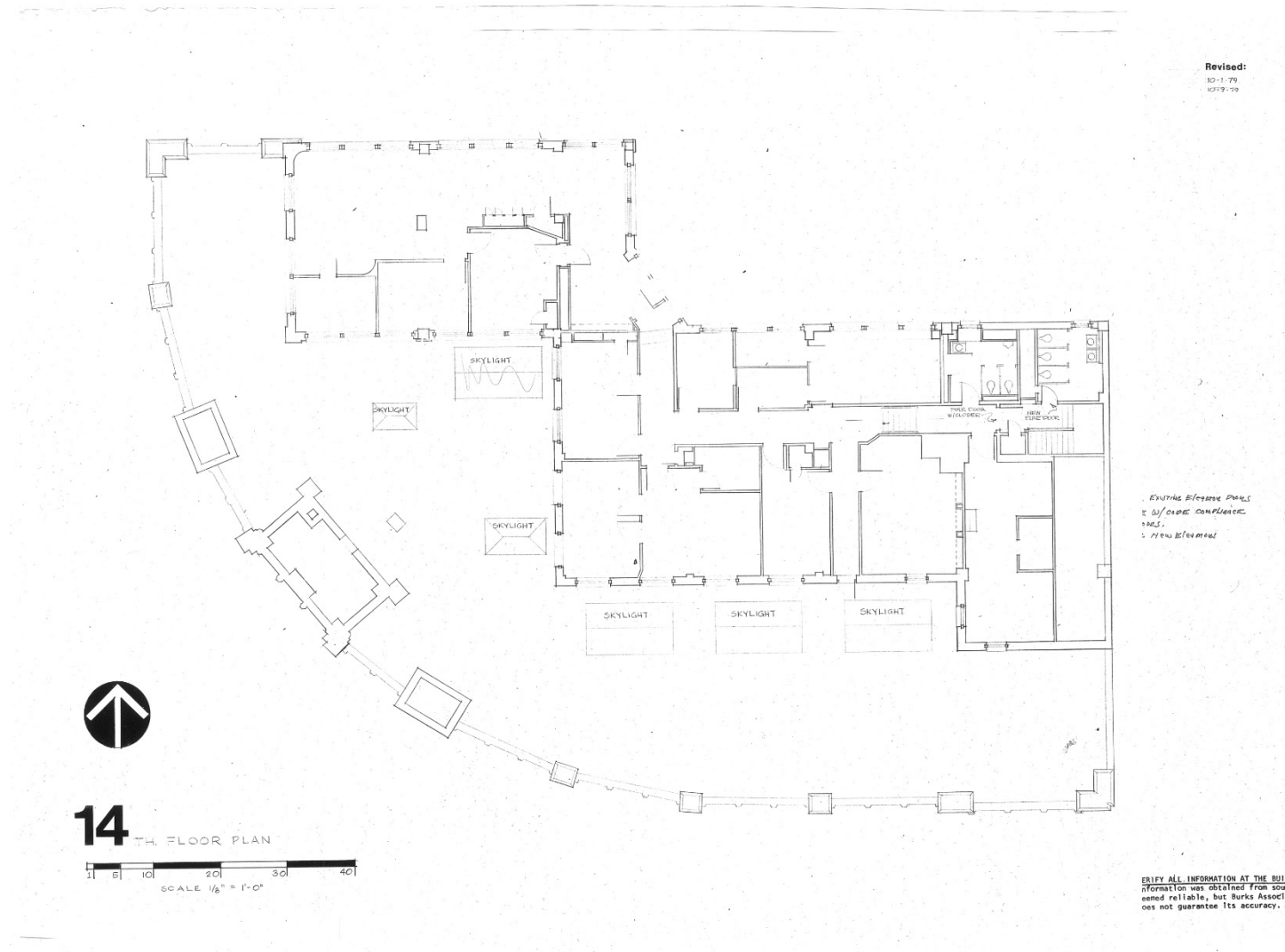
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**Figure 10:** Roof Plan

**Source:** Building owner collection, drawing circa 1980 by Burks Associates.



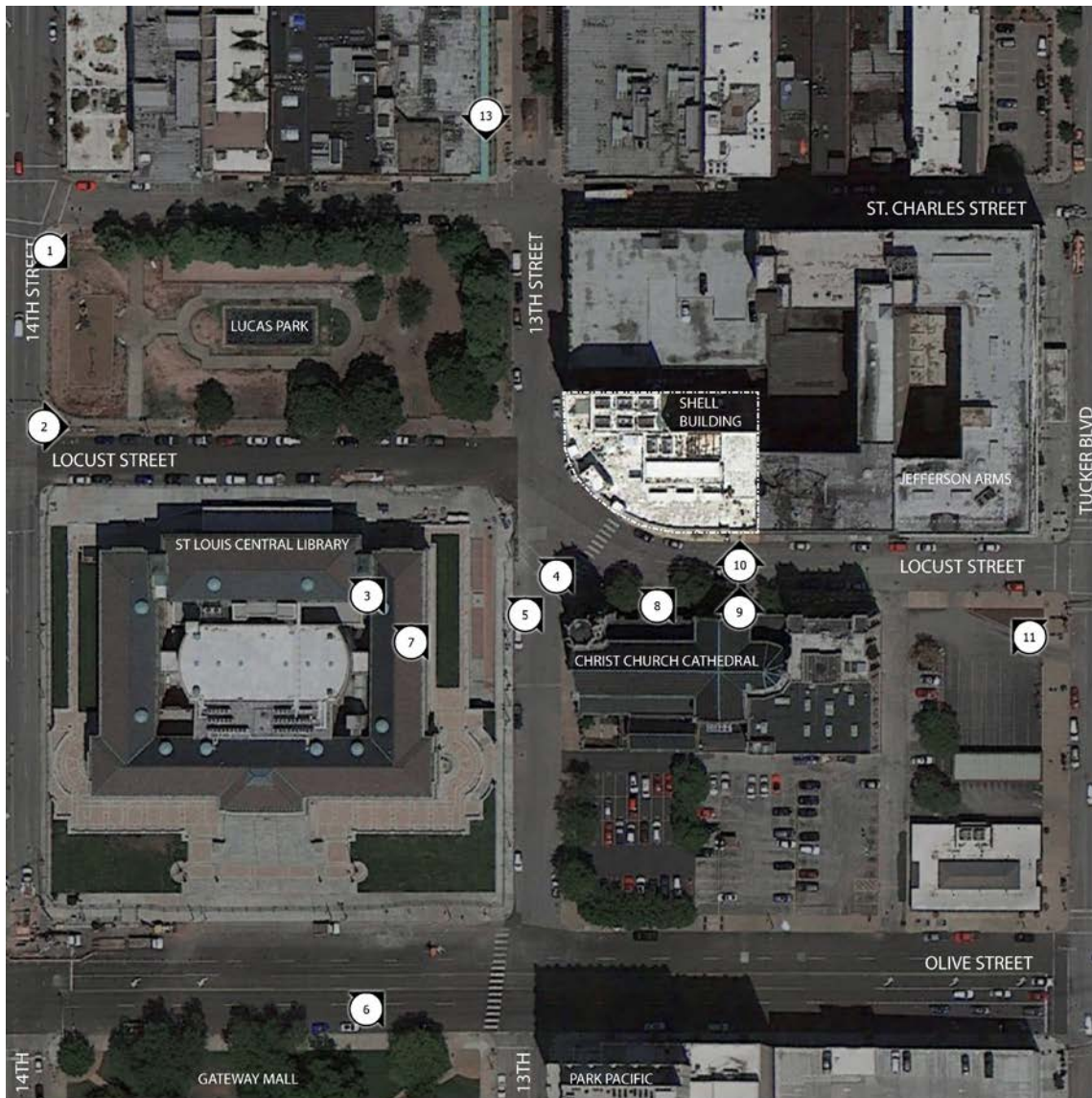
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**Figure 11:** Area context map and Photo Key.  
**Source:** created by SPACE Architects.

38.630867°      -90.198497°  
Latitude:              Longitude:



 SHELL BUILDING SITE PLAN

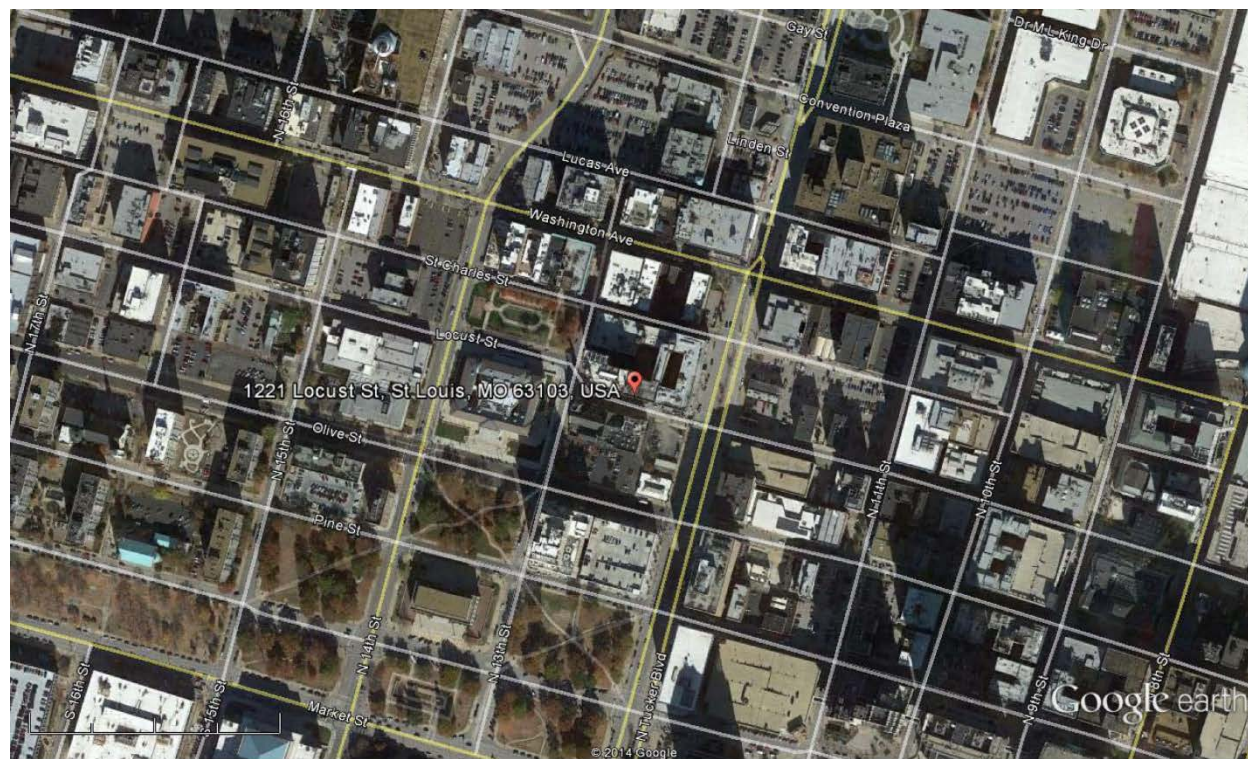


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**Figure 12:**  
1221 Locust Street  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Latitude: 38.630753  
Longitude: -90.198309

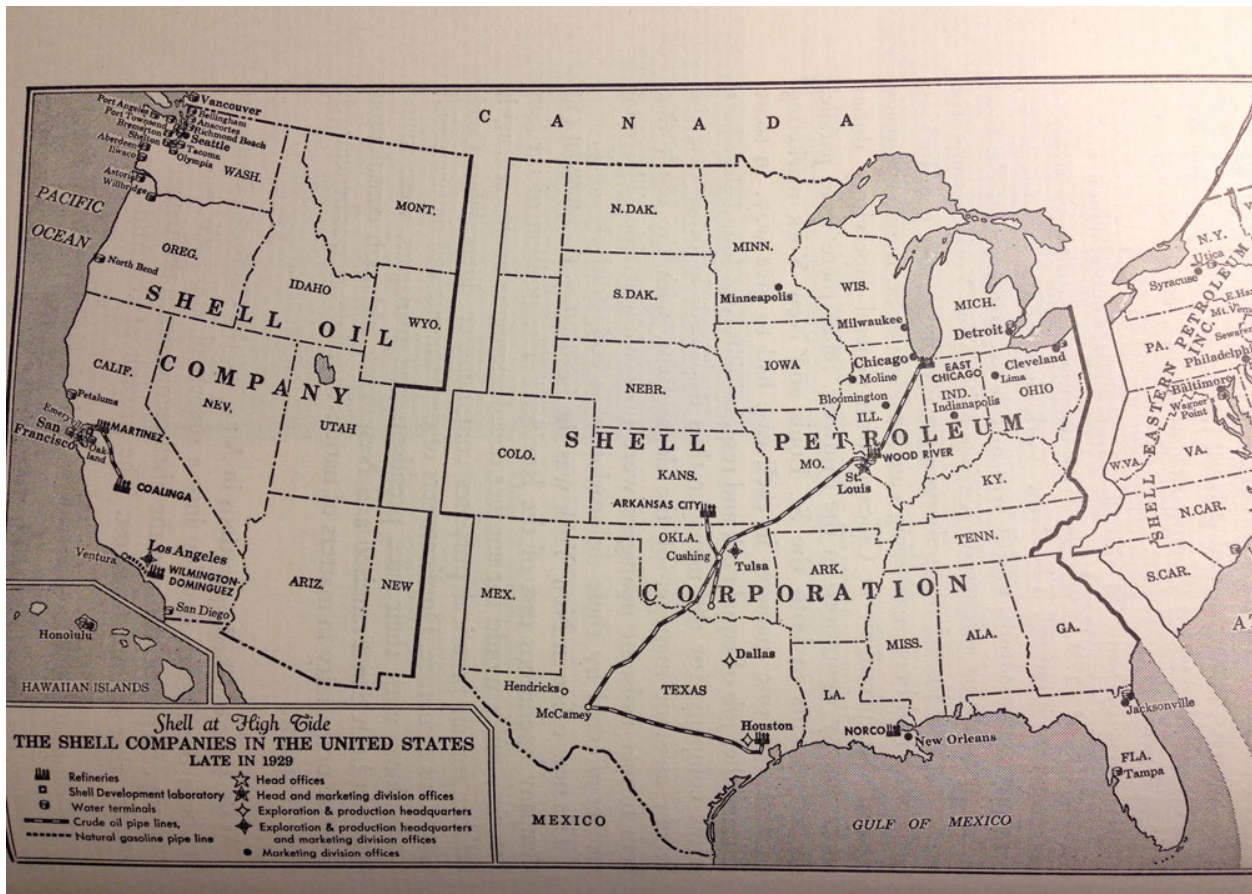


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**Figure 13:** Map of Shell Companies in the United States, late1929.  
**Source:** Beaton, Kendall. *Enterprise in Oil: A History of Shell in the United States.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957. Pg 498.



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**Figure 14:** View of the Southwestern Bell Building looking southwest from corner of Pine and 10th St.  
**Source:** Christina Clagett, photographer.







HOTEL  
JEFFERSON

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Cofu de Oupans



SHEFFIELD







SHELL BUILDING

1221

SHELL BUILDING  
JAMESON & SHELL  
ARCHITECTS - 1928

SHELL BUILDING

1221

SHELL BUILDING  
DESIGNED BY J. H. WATSON  
CONSTRUCTED BY J. H. WATSON





**ATM**

**Bank of America**

1211

20



us bank



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