

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name South Side National Bank

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Location

street & number 3606 Gravois Avenue not for publication N/A  
city or town St. Louis vicinity N/A  
state Missouri code MO county St. Louis [Independent City] code 510  
zip code 63116

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official (Claire Blackwell, Deputy SHPO) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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 commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE Sub: financial institution  
COMMERCE medical business/office

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE Sub: financial institution  
NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite  
roof ASPHALT  
walls STONE: Limestone  
BRICK  
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 (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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 (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1928

Significant Dates 1928

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder St. Louis Bank Building & Equipment Co.  
Fruin-Colnon Contracting Co.

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>740 040</u>	<u>4272 900</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ 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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Lynn Josse, Associate Research Director

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis date March 23, 2000

street & number 917 Locust 7th Floor telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101-1413

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name South Side National Bank (Thomas Teschner, President)

street & number 3606 Gravois Avenue telephone (314)776-7000

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63116

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

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### Summary

South Side National Bank (1928) is a ten-story Art Deco style building located at 3606 Gravois Avenue at the southwest corner of its intersection with Grand Avenue. Due to its height and prominent location, it is the dominant feature on the skyline in the immediate neighborhood. Primary elevations face north, east and west with the historic entrance located in the center of the north elevation. The composition places a seven-story tower atop a wide three-story base. Abstract and figural low-relief sculpture is prominently placed on the limestone primary elevations, including eagles and fasces, symbols of the building's original status as a national bank. The building's symmetrical massing, vertical window strips, and absence of traditional cornices are all characteristic of the Art Deco style. At the rear elevation, a two-story addition stretches into the parking lot to the south. The addition is clad in limestone at the east and brick at the other elevations. Above the addition, the south elevation of the tower is also clad in brick. The interior of the building is designed around a banking hall at the second story and mezzanine level, featuring intact Art Deco plaster relief work and original fixtures. Neither the addition or the full window replacement has a significant effect on the building's integrity as a striking Art Deco design. The building appears to be in good condition.

### Site

South Side National Bank is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Grand Avenue and Gravois Avenue, two major thoroughfares in south St. Louis. This section of Grand Avenue runs close to true north-south. East of Grand, Gravois runs northeast/southwest; west of Grand it runs much closer to east-west. Due to the angle of the intersection, a minimally landscaped triangular island is located just north of the bank with a cut-off road linking Grand and Gravois directly in front of the bank. Both of the northern corners of the intersection are occupied by modern commercial buildings serving the auto traffic (a fast food restaurant at the northwest, a gas station at the northeast). At the southeast corner of the intersection, several low-rise historic commercial buildings line the sidewalk.

The bank is separated from the historic building to the south by a wide parking lot and a side street. To the west, a public alley separates the bank from its drive-through banking lanes. Although Sanborn maps indicate that the drive-through facility is connected to the main building by an underground tube, there is no historic connection between the drive-through and the main building. The drive-through is not visually connected to the bank and is not proposed for National Register listing.

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The character of this neighborhood is overwhelmingly residential and low-rise. South Side National Bank, located at such a prominent intersection, is highly visible from all directions.

### Exterior

South Side National Bank is a ten-story Art Deco building. Its seven-story tower is set back from a three-story base. A two-story addition is at the rear (south elevation) of the building (See map, Figure 1). Limestone is the main surface material at the primary elevations above the gray granite first floor; the east elevation of the addition is also limestone. The south and west walls of the addition and the south elevation of the tower are brick.

The bank's north-facing facade has a ten-bay base which is three stories high (Photo #1). Nine bays of the base are symmetrical around a monumental entrance bay; an additional bay at the western end of the facade is set back so as to not interrupt the symmetrical composition. At the first story, gray granite is the primary surface material. Windows are almost full height; as with the rest of the exterior windows, these are non-historic replacements. There is a cut-away corner entrance (now non-operable) at the northeast corner of the building. Originally, the corner entrance led to a storefront (historically occupied by a drugstore); in 1969 the bank occupied the first floor as offices.

The main entrance is centered at bay five; "South Side National Bank" is proclaimed over the door in large raised letters (Photo #2). A secondary entrance in the sixth bay accesses elevators to the tower. There is a single door at the ninth bay. None of the doors on the north side of the bank are currently used due to security concerns.

Above the first story, the base is organized around the monumental entrance bay. A two-story arched window is set within a projecting pavilion, its upper corners defined by large relief stone eagles, facing out, resting on shields and fasces. The parapet at this center block extends higher than the rest of the base, crowned by a relief shield motif. To either side, three bays have two-story windows defining the banking hall within. The windows are separated by limestone piers, chamfered at their upper edges, with abstract lintel panels and a stylized rinceau band carved at the parapet. The outer bays (bays 1 and 9) project slightly; their upper two stories feature paired windows and additional stylized carvings. Each is topped by a stylized stone eagle which sits atop fasces and shield carvings at the parapet wall. The westernmost bay is recessed from the rest of the building; it has paired vertical windows at the upper story and does not reflect the lavish carving of the main block.

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The seven-story tower has a shallow U-shaped plan with set back cutaway corners facing diagonally out to the northeast and northwest. Primary elevations of the tower have a strong vertical emphasis; windows are articulated as vertical strips divided by piers and separated within the strips by stylized diamond transom panels. Although original drawings show sash windows in the openings, historic photographs indicate that the original windows were in four-part metal frames and that the center panes opened transom-style. The present windows are non-historic one-over-one replacements.

The tower's north elevation is expressed in three divisions. The center bay is recessed; it is composed of three vertical divisions of one-over-one windows separated by limestone piers which rise to the top (tenth) story, terminating in projecting fascias carvings. At the outer bays, paired windows are separated by a narrow pier; the upward motion is halted at the ninth story, terminating in a frieze of flat discs surrounded by stylized geometric patterns. Above these at the top story, the window pattern is repeated but the wall is flush, with incised abstract foliation at the corners below chamfered edges. The cornice here uses a shield motif which carries around the corners to the east and west elevations. The cornice is a step higher at the center, featuring a stylized geometric foliated pattern with four lions' heads projecting. At the roofline, a corrugated metal screen hides antennae installed per a 1997 permit.

At the east (Grand Avenue) elevation, the building's base reflects the arrangement of the facade's entrance bay (Photo #3). Storefront windows are at the first floor, with a two-story round-arched window above. Here the window has stone mullions, with a historic neon "South Side National Bank" sign between stories. Eagles face out from the entrance defining the upper corners of the block, as at the main entrance. A single bay to either side of the center block has paired windows at the second and third stories. The tower is articulated in a similar manner to the front elevation's outer bays, with three window channels rising to the ninth floor, and a flush wall at the tenth.

To the south of the historic building's base is a two-story addition, faced with limestone at this elevation. Its Grand Avenue frontage projects very slightly from the original building. The otherwise flat wall is given interest by a series of shallow arches and vertical recessed panels. Eight rectangular windows at the second story are set into these depressions.

The west elevation's base is a three-story brick wall, blind except for a door at the south end and five windows at the third story (Photo #4). The tower is articulated in a similar manner to the east elevation. To the south, the addition is one story high.

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The south elevation is the rear of the building and the location of the bank's current main entrance (Photo #3). The two-story addition reaches south from the main building. The blonde brick bevels back into a center entrance, a enclosed atrium-like projection of brown tinted glass. To either side of the entrance, two windows are at each story. A "South Side National" sign is at the upper right corner of the wall, and an ATM is installed east of the entrance. To the west of the two story portion, the addition drops to a single story in height. This section is two bays wide with two windows in each bay. A rooftop deck on this portion is accessed from the second story of the addition.

Above the addition, the tower shows its buff brick rear elevation. The center section of the building is recessed, revealing the tower's U-shaped plan. At each level, there are two windows in the center of the U; the arms of the U which face south are blind with the exception of one window towards the base of the east arm. The elevator shaft in the west arm is shown by a one-story projection above the rest of the building.

**Interior**

While South Side National Bank reads as a ten-story building from the exterior, the third floor is considered a mezzanine. The lowest story of the tower, which appears to be the fourth floor from the exterior, is considered the third floor.

The first story is at grade; due to the slope of the ground, it has three different floor levels with a total difference of several feet. The main entrance in the center of the building leads into a drop-ceilinged lobby, the chief feature of which is the original wide staircase leading up into the banking hall. A door to the south leads into the main elevator lobby. Historic photos indicate that the stair and elevator lobbies were originally the same space; it was divided in modern times for separate access. The narrow elevator lobby has a remnant of the room's coffered ceiling which has been partially restored at the south end of the room (Photo #5). It is not known if the original ceiling is intact in the covered areas. The two elevators are against the south wall, separated by a mail drop.

At the east and west ends of the first floor, the original storefront retail spaces were converted into offices and storage in 1969. No historic features remain. The eastern office space connects by a hallway to the building's addition.

The addition (1981) is primarily an open-plan banking space with modern carpeting and finishes. The center section of the addition is two stories high. To either side of the open space, a



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mezzanine level includes additional offices. Directly opposite the main entrance, a flight of stairs leads through a wide opening in the bank's former exterior wall to a landing, part of the original building. Here the stairs from the addition meet the stairs from the front (north) lobby. Viewed from the landing, the opening to the addition is the lower part of a large arch, the top of which is blind (Photo #6). The arch's plaster surround empanels floral and abstract geometric designs in the legs and uses similar motifs in running ornament at the arch. Atop the impost blocks, muscular eagles face into the opening. Like almost all of the plaster ornament in the room, the designs are washed in a peach-colored paint. This arch originally housed a large mirror, which was removed to provide access from the addition.

From the landing, the staircase splits and rises to the banking hall to the north. The two-story hall is the bank's primary historic public space (Photo #7). The north side of the room is occupied by original teller booths, separated from the public space by original counters and metal surrounds. Within the teller space, six structural piers, squared with chamfered corners, support ceiling beams. The piers are reflected by pilasters at the opposite wall. At the north wall, a center round-arched window, two stories high, has a similar surround to the arch at the stair landing.

The west wall of the room is also separated from the public space by a metal grille, behind which is a pair of safety deposit box vaults with round doors in joining metal surrounds. A round-arched window is above the vaults, flanked by small rectangular casement windows. Below each window is a small plaster panel with center rosette.

Corridors to either side of the bank vaults lead to back offices; a stair at the south side of the vault leads up to the mezzanine behind the round-arched window. Stairs to the north of the vault lead down to the ground level.

At the south wall, to the west of the staircase, two narrow elevators are separated by a mail drop. To the east of the staircase is a customer service area. A passage between pilasters leads to the second story of the addition.

The east wall has similar features to the west end of the room. A solid wall is pierced by a two-story round-arched opening; the upper half is a window into the mezzanine conference room, flanked by small rectangular windows as at the east end; the bottom part of the arch is an opening into an office. The arch is interrupted by a plaster spandrel panel. The mezzanine is accessed via stairs from the east end of the south wall.

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The most significant features of the banking hall are at the beamed ceiling: the plasterwork which adorns columns capitals, consoles and coffers, as well as the eight-sided light fixtures which hang from ceiling pendants. Historic photos on view at the bank indicate that the beam ceiling was originally grained and painted; the beams have since been painted white, but the ornamental plaster has been restored. The ceiling designs are primarily variations on stylized Art Deco flowers and foliage.

Typical floors in the tower section (floors 3-9) are organized with a central hall leading from the elevators in the south wall to offices against the north, east, and west walls. Original finishes include some walls and doors, door hardware which incorporates the "SSN" logo, and terrazzo floors. Drop ceilings prevail throughout. The sixth floor has been completely gutted and now has an open plan (except for the structural columns).

### Alterations

The most obvious exterior alteration is the two-story addition (1981) at the south side of the building. Clad in blonde brick at the south and west, and limestone at the east, the addition is clearly modern in origin. It has very little impact on the three primary elevations. All exterior windows have been replaced, but the modern sashes fit into the original openings and do not substantially detract from the design of the building. The roof antennae and their tall screen are another notable alteration, which detract from the design integrity of the building but do not prevent the historic character of the building from being apparent.

Interior alterations are more substantial. The most important space, the banking hall, retains its plaster ornament and original fixtures, although original painted finishes have been covered. Fortunately the addition of a two-story wing to the south had very little impact on the banking hall. The original lobby has been subdivided, and only a remnant of the coffered ceiling has been restored. It is not known if the remainder of the original ceiling is intact above the drop ceiling.

In the building's tower, most of the original hallway configurations are intact, including elevator openings and step-up restrooms which do not conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The exception is the sixth floor, which was converted into an open workspace. The tower is currently vacant except for the third floor, which is used by the bank.

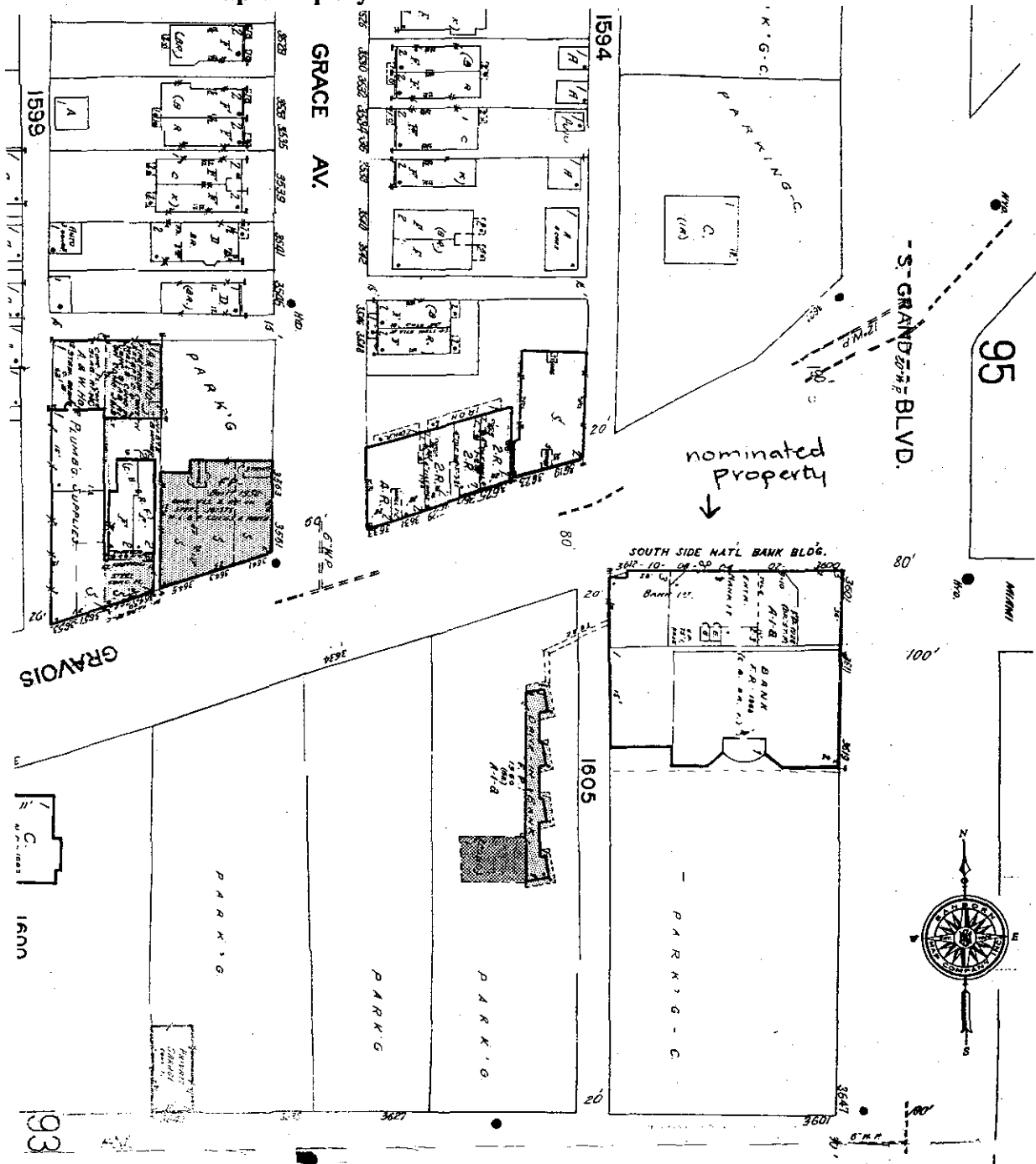
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South Side National Bank  
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**Figure 1: Site map**  
Source: Sanborn Map Company



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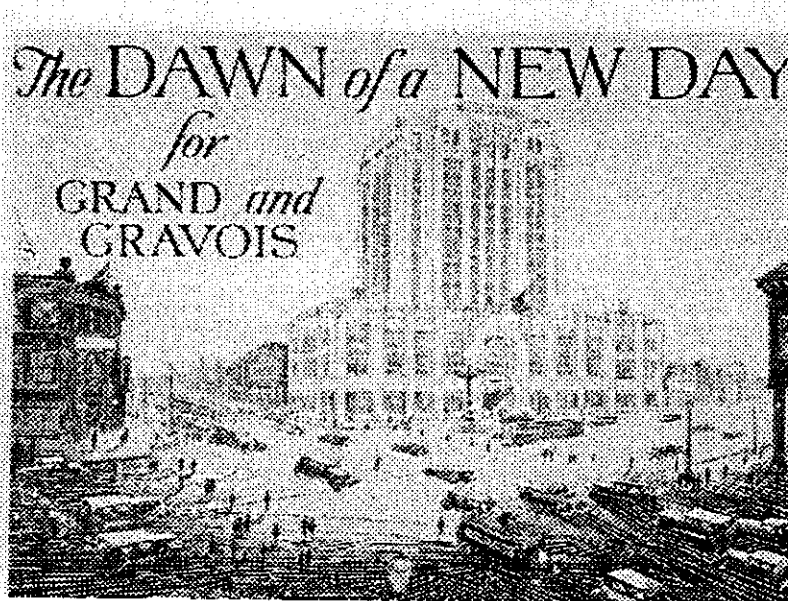
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**Figure 2: Perspective of South Side National Bank, 1929. The Farmers & Merchants Exchange building, still extant, is at the left side of the drawing. Source: "The Dawn of a New Day for Grand and Gravois" opening day brochure.**



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**Figure 3: Perspective of South Side National Bank, 1929. Source: "The Dawn of a New Day for Grand and Gravois" opening day brochure.**



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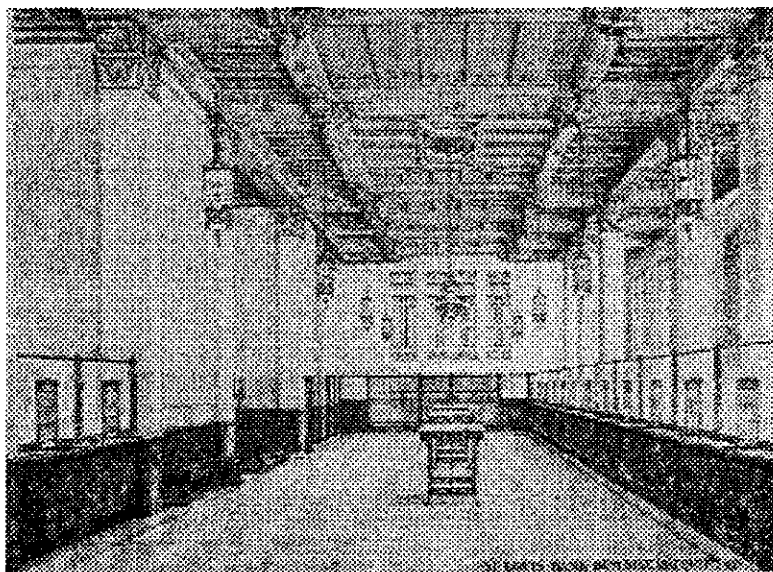
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**Figure 4: Interior of Banking Hall drawing, published 1929. Source: "The Dawn of a New Day for Grand and Gravois" opening day brochure.**



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**Summary**

South Side National Bank (3606 Gravois Avenue, St. Louis) is significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. The ten-story building is an excellent local example of the Art Deco style. The style is characterized by setback forms, stylized relief ornament and vertical window strips, all of which are present in this example. Other features of South Side National Bank which are typical for Art Deco buildings include its limestone veneer, the use of bands of relief sculpture instead of cornices, and Beaux-Arts inspired massing. This building has been identified in a 1987 survey and in the City of St. Louis' preservation plan as a significant example of its style or type. The exterior is well-preserved and retains integrity, although a two-story 1981 addition impacts the rear elevation. Original windows have been replaced with modern sash windows, but this alteration in no way prevents the building from being a good example of the Art Deco style. The banking hall is a significant interior space which conveys its significance despite alterations by paint. The period of significance, 1928, represents the date of construction.

**Narrative**

South Side National Bank was the result of a merger between two existing trust companies. Since 1916, the South Side Trust Company had been located at the intersection of Broadway and Pestalozzi in the City of St. Louis, about two miles to the northeast of the nominated property. In 1928, the company's directors entered into negotiations to merge with the Farmers and Merchants Trust Company, which had been located at the intersection of Grand and Gravois since its founding in 1907. In that year, a company history relates, the west side of the intersection was a dirt road and parts of the immediate area were still in agricultural use. Originally located in a rented storeroom at the northwest corner of the intersection, Farmers and Merchants Trust moved into a new home at the southwest corner in 1914.

According to company literature, by the late 1920s the South Side Trust's depositors were moving west, "particularly within the district of which Grand and Gravois is considered the center."<sup>1</sup> In November, 1927, the board of directors purchased a parcel at the southwest corner of Grand and Gravois for the erection of a new bank building. In 1928, the shareholders of both

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<sup>1</sup> South Side National Bank of St. Louis. "Dawn of a New Day for Grand and Gravois: Commemorating the Opening of our New Banking Home and Office Building." Pamphlet. 1929, n.p. St. Louis Public Library Special Collections.

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institutions voted to merge and become a national bank. South Side National Bank has remained at its original location since it opened in 1929 (although it was closed and reorganized during the Depression), and it appears likely that additional research would yield a strong case for Criterion A significance.

Although the building permit issued in January 1928 lists Leonhard Haeger as architect, all subsequent materials published by the bank (including some of the drawings) indicate that it was designed by the St. Louis Bank Building and Equipment Company.<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1913, the company became known for providing the most modern bank equipment, eventually branching out into the design field. During the Depression, the company's interests turned to other design projects (particularly cocktail lounges in the post-Prohibition era). This experience contributed to the organization's growth after the Depression; by 1985, renamed Bank Building & Equipment Co., the corporation claimed to have designed or remodeled over 9000 financial institutions. Among these works was South Side National Bank's drive-up facility (1960; not included in the nominated property).

The contracting firm, Fruin-Colnon, was founded in 1872. By the time of the South Side National Bank job, the company was building some of St. Louis' most prestigious buildings, including the Civil Courts. The company still exists as Fru-Con and is controlled by Bilfinger + Berger, one of the world's largest contracting firms.

South Side National Bank has been identified in several sources as an architecturally significant building. The "Art Deco and the International Style" survey of St. Louis and St. Louis County (1987) surveyed 85 buildings or groups of buildings which exemplify early modern style and which were not included on the National Register or within previous inventories. Of the 34 survey sheets on sites within the City, only four note significant interiors - including South Side National Bank. The building is also identified in "A Preservation Plan for St. Louis" (the City's official preservation plan), in its section on 20th century neighborhood bank buildings, as the city's "most distinctive building of this type."

One of the most concise definitions of the characteristics of American Art Deco is to be found in John J.-G. Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture*:

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<sup>2</sup>Leonhard Haeger is known as an architect of lesser residential and other buildings in St. Louis. He maintained his own office during this period; it is not known if there is any affiliation between Haeger and the St. Louis Bank Building & Equipment Company.



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Art Deco is characterized by a linear, hard edge or angular composition often with a vertical emphasis and highlighted with stylized decoration. The facades of buildings often are arranged in a series of set backs emphasizing the geometric form. Strips of windows with decorated spandrels add to the vertical feeling of the composition. Hard-edged low relief ornamentation is found around door and window openings, string courses and along the roof edges or parapet. Ornamental detailing often is executed in the same material as the building or [in other materials]. . . . Although straight-headed windows (metal sash or casement type) are more popular, an occasional circular window or rounded window and door jamb is found.<sup>3</sup>

South Side National Bank fits this brief description in every particular. Perhaps the most striking feature of the building - aside from its size, which makes it a monument in this predominantly low-rise neighborhood - is the decorative scheme sculpted in low relief. Intricately geometric foliage, abstract waves, and other typical Art Deco designs are fused with the eagle and fasces motifs, which specifically call up the power and prestige of "a strong National Bank; the largest in South St. Louis," "under the direct supervision of the Federal Government."<sup>4</sup> A great deal of this relief sculpture is located at the top edge of the base and tower in lieu of a cornice - another typical feature of Art Deco.

The massing of South Side National Bank provides another clue to its stylistic ancestry. Its emphasis on symmetry and a logical progression of interior spaces articulated on the exterior reflect the ideals of Paris' Ecole des Beaux Arts. Historian David Gebhard writes:

Inssofar as most of America's Art Deco structures were produced by architects directly or indirectly educated within the Parisian Beaux-Arts system, it should not be surprising that when these architects turned their attention to the "new language of design . . . the forms they produced were, to a considerable degree, derived from classical precedent. . . . Whatever historical sources the Art Deco designer drew from, the forms, surfaces, and details were maneuvered within a Beaux-Arts

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<sup>3</sup> John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture* (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1977), 77

<sup>4</sup> South Side National Bank of St. Louis. "Dawn of a New Day for Grand and Gravois: Commemorating the Opening of our New Banking Home and Office Building." Pamphlet. 1929, n.p. St. Louis Public Library Special Collections.

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South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

framework.<sup>5</sup>

South Side National Bank is one of a number of monumental St. Louis buildings in which Art Deco ornament adorns essentially Beaux Arts compositions; others include Kiel Opera House (NR 2/11/2000) and the Soldiers' Memorial. Comparison with these buildings also demonstrates that the bank's emphasis on severity and monumentality, expressed in blank limestone walls relieved by carved ornament, has more in common with the subset of the style Gebhard calls "PWA Moderne" than with the more exuberant forms of Art Deco.

In addition to the ornamental scheme and massing, other design elements contribute to the bank's Art Deco character. Gebhard writes that the subset of Art Deco known as American Vertical (a term usually applied to taller buildings) "articulated their thin stone-veneered or terra-cotta-clad surfaces with attenuated vertical shafts alternating with vertical bands, usually recessed, containing windows and spandrels."<sup>6</sup> This system is used at South Side National Bank's base as well as its tower, where the spandrel panels are adorned with a stylized diamond pattern.

The interior of the bank building also boasts one of the city's fine Art Deco public spaces. The two-story banking hall at the center of the second floor retains original plasterwork at beams, pendants, and arches, all displaying flat relief sculptural forms. Most are floral and abstract; eagles appear at the arches at the main window over the north entrance and at the former mirror at the south wall. Original metal teller booths and banking tables add to the historic interest of the room, although they are not specific to the Art Deco style. Historic photographs indicate that the plaster beams at the ceiling were originally painted to resemble decorated wooden beams (today they are white). The extant plaster features are all painted in a peach color; their original color is unknown. Despite the alterations (most notably the white paint), this room is one of the most intact Art Deco public spaces in St. Louis. As previously mentioned, it is one of only four city interiors noted in the Art Deco/International Style survey of 1987.

South Side National Bank has been a good trustee of its property over the years. When modern banking needs called for an addition to the original building (1981), it was designed to have minimal impact on the primary elevations and banking hall. Even before the addition was contemplated, the bank had expressed a commitment to preserving the historic features of the building. In 1974, President and Chairman Joseph Furrer told a reporter "We've thought about

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<sup>5</sup> David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996),

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5.

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South Side National Bank  
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modernizing the building, but our customers always tell us they like it just the way it is."<sup>7</sup>

More recently, the bank's commitment to preserving its building has become more uncertain. In mid-1999, the bank confirmed rumors that it was considering an offer to purchase the property, raze the building, and replace it with a smaller banking facility and a Walgreens drug store. The news provoked two public protests led by neighborhood residents. At the time of this submission, the bank is cooperating with a feasibility study funded by the City of St. Louis to determine reuse options.

### Integrity

As explained in Section 7, there have been a number of alterations to the bank building which impact its integrity. The most notable change has been the 1981 addition of a two-story wing, limestone at the street elevation and brick at the others, at the rear of the building. Fortunately, the design of the addition is relatively sensitive. It does not obscure or diminish any of the character-defining features of the bank's exterior; indeed, it is not visible from the north as one views the building's facade. It is clearly modern in origin and cannot be mistaken for part of the original building.

A second integrity issue with the exterior of the building is the full window replacement. While removal of the historic windows does diminish the building's historic appearance, it does not seriously impact the building's ability to convey its historic character as an example of Art Deco design. The final exterior alteration which bears on the building's integrity is the addition of roof antennae and a tall metal screen to keep them from the public view. While this is clearly a modern intrusion, it does not prevent the building from being read as a good example of Art Deco style.

Interior alterations are also evident. Most notably, the banking hall has been painted white, and its historic plaster ornament painted peach-colored. This is a departure from the original scheme, which appears to have had elaborately painted ceiling beams to enhance the room's character. Loss of the original paint scheme is damaging to the room's integrity, but this is mitigated by the intact plaster work, vaults, hanging lamps and teller cages. The rarity of this type of Art Deco interior in St. Louis adds to its significance. On the whole, while the building has undergone typical alterations to remain a functioning bank for over 70 years, the building's historic character as one of St. Louis' best examples of the Art Deco style remains intact.

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<sup>7</sup>Michael Montgomery, "Down by der Gravois' Bank Maintains Firm Hold on Past," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 8, 1974.

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South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property consists of Lots 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of McNeil & Hart's Second Subdivision in the City of St. Louis, Missouri.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the two lots that were purchased in 1927 to construct the original building as well as the three lots purchased in 1978 to construct the addition.

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South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

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South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City] MO

Lynn Jesse

2/2000

neg: Landmarks Assoc. of St. Louis  
East & north elevations; camera facing SW

Photo #1





South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Lynn Josse

2/2000

neg: Landmarks Assoc. of St. Louis

north elevation - main entrance, camera facing SE  
Photo #2



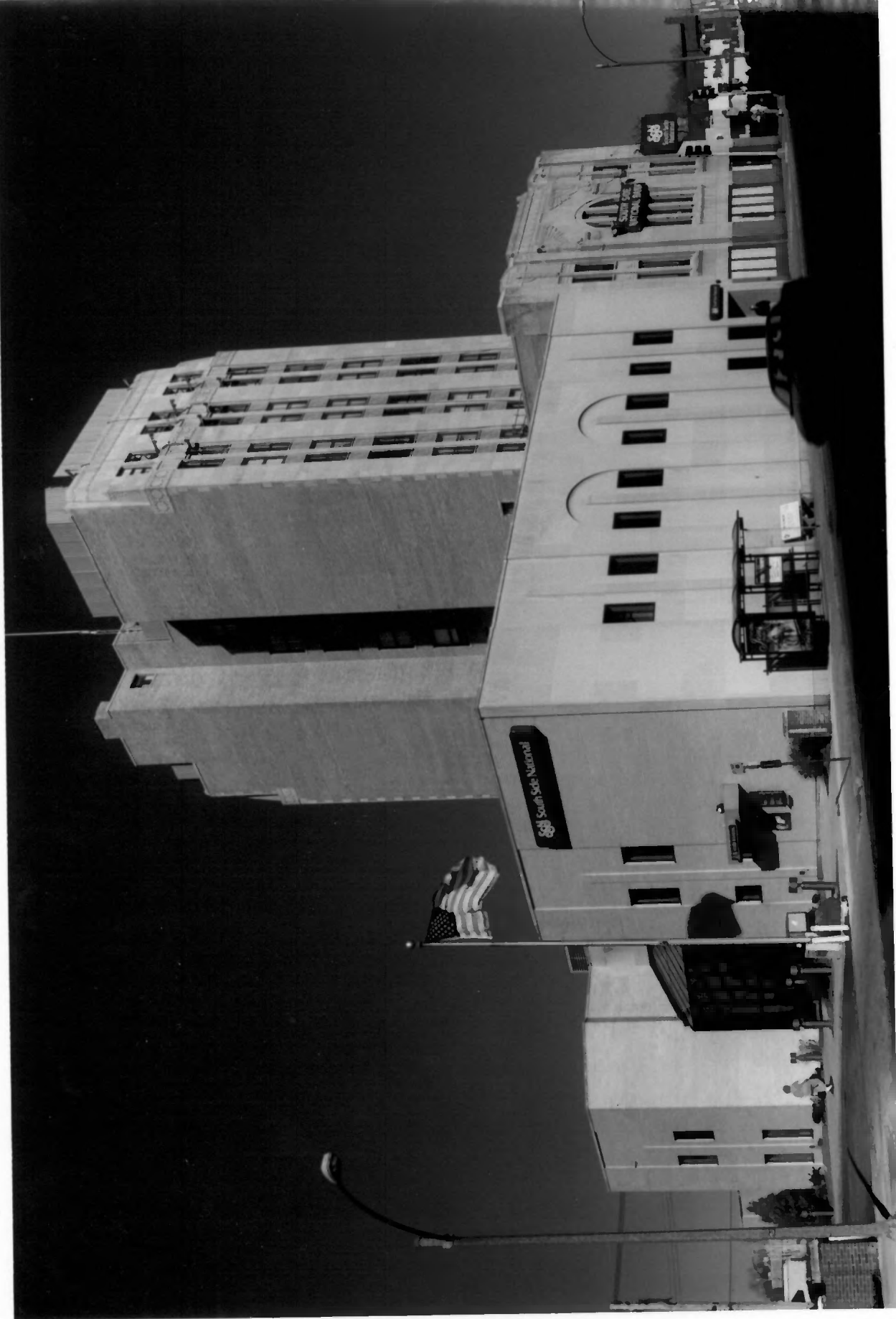
South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Lynn Jesse

2/2000

neg: Landmarks Assoc. of St. Louis  
east & south elevations, camera facing NW

Photo 3



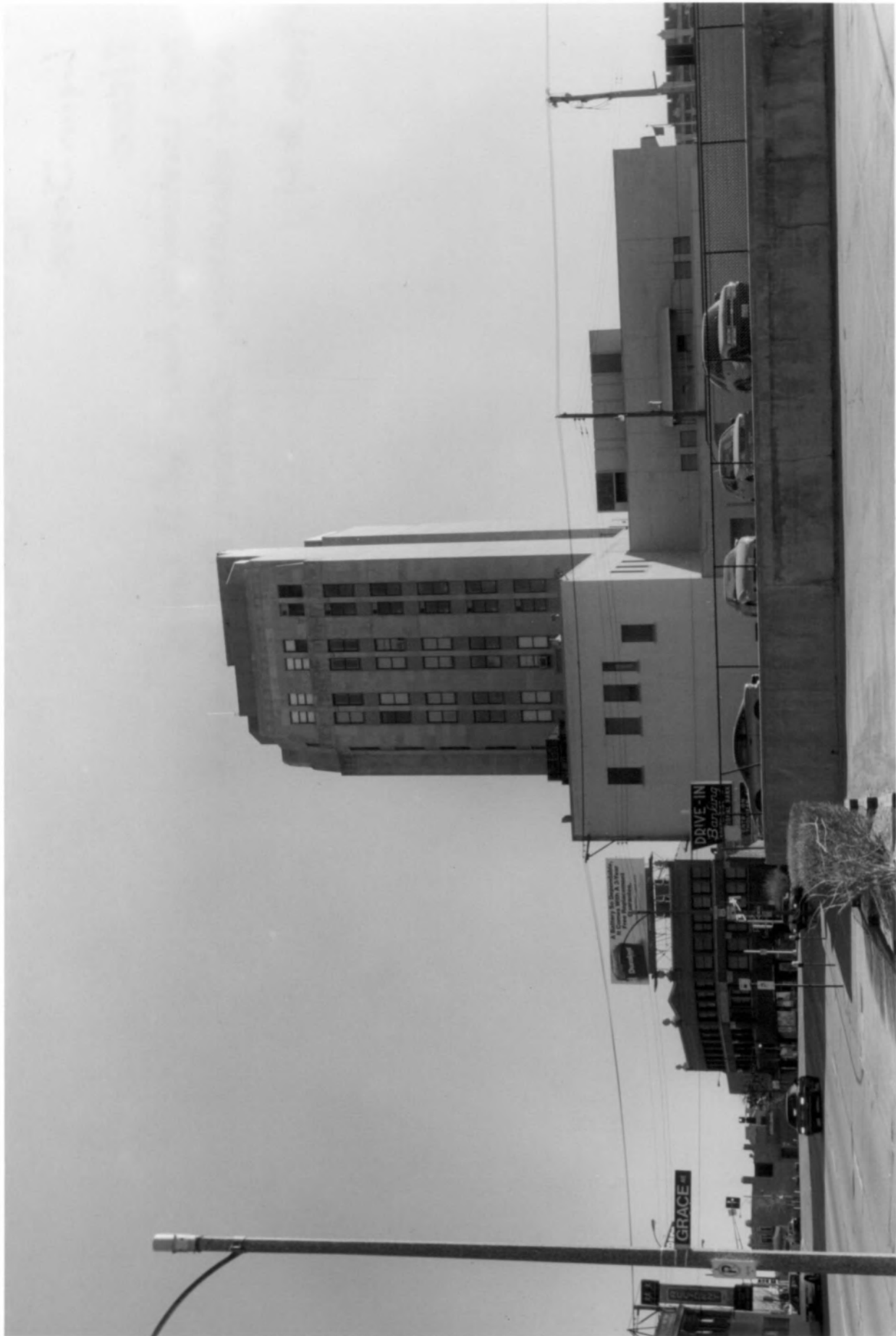
South Side National Bank  
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Lynn Josse

2/2000

neg: landmarks Assoc. of St. Louis  
west elevation, camera facing east

Photo #4



South Side National Bank

St Louis - [Independent City], Mo

Lynn Josse

1/2000

neg: Landmarks Assoc of St. Louis

Elevator lobby - camera facing S  
(ground floor)

Photo # 5





South Side National Bank  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Lynn Josse

1/2000

neg Landmarks Assoc of St. Louis

view from banking hall down main  
staircase into addition, camera  
facing SW

Photo 6



South Side National Bank  
St. Louis (Independent City) MO

Lynn Jesse

1/2000

neg Landmarks Assoc of St Louis


Banking hall / camera facing 

Photo # 7

