NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 801 Edwin (also Steelcote Square Number 5, 3418 Gratiot) [N/A] not for publication

city or town St. Louis [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63103

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Mark A. Miles — May 15, 2007

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date

[ ] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [ ].
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet [ ].
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register
[ ] other, explain
See continuation sheet [ ].

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

[X] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property

[X] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
6		Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

NO STYLE

Materials

foundation CONCRETE
walls CONCRETE
BRICK
roof RUBBER
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

[X] **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.

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

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

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

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

[ ] **B** removed from its original location.

[ ] **C** a birthplace or grave.

[ ] **D** a cemetery.

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

[ ] **F** a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance
ARCHITECTURE
ENGINEERING
INDUSTRY
INVENTION

Periods of Significance
1922-1955

Significant Dates
1922
1924
1929

Significant Person(s)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects
Joseph Bright Construction Company

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

[ ] previously listed in the National Register

[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register

[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark

[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#_____

[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

#_____

Primary location of additional data:

[X] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[ ] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[ ] University

[ ] Other:

Name of repository:_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.752 acres

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	740790	4278980			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy P. Maloney and Karen Bode Baxter

organization Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist date March 27, 2007

street & number 5811 Delor Street telephone (314) 353-0593

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63109

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name Steelcote Redevelopment Corporation (c/o Michael Schaab)

street & number 2931 B High Ridge Blvd. telephone (314) 503-6011

city or town High Ridge state MO zip code 63049

SUMMARY

Located at 801 Edwin, (also addressed as Steelcote Square Number 5 and 3418 Gratiot) in St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory includes the five story exposed concrete frame factory building (with the first three floors put into operation in 1924 and the top two floors finished in 1929) and its five associated outbuildings (built between 1922 and 1929) directly north of the factory. The factory is situated in what was once a densely developed residential and industrial area known as Mill Creek Valley. What was once a swampy valley (more than a true creek bed), Mill Creek Valley extended west out of the central business district along the railroad tracks from Union Station. Today, this particular section of Mill Creek Valley, north of Chouteau Avenue and east of Grand Avenue, still retains its early twentieth century industrial character, although some of the industrial buildings have been demolished and the land is less densely developed than it was historically. Running along the north end are the railroad tracks with U.S. Highway 40/64 just beyond on elevated roadbeds. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory today looks much as it did in 1929 when the complex was completed, except for the physical deterioration due to its age. It only has had one alteration made to the original plant when the Cook House was expanded with a small addition in 1951. Besides the original plant, there is an overhead bridge that parallels the north side of the factory building and crosses the street (known as both Edwin and Steelcote Square) to the east where it connects to the large office and warehouse building, both finished in 1956 as part of the company's expansion. The bridge is not counted in the resource count since it is currently under demolition and has been permanently sealed off at the factory wall for several years and the 1956 building is not included in the nominated site since the innovative history and historic plant did not include the site east of the street.

MAIN FACTORY BUILDING

This five story industrial warehouse/factory building has an exposed concrete structural frame with red brick below the steel industrial windows (with their concrete sills) that span the bays between each concrete pier. The building is three bays wide by five bays deep. The concrete piers of each bay are visible as caps between the clay coping tiles of the brick parapet on each elevation. Two decorative concrete diamond shaped medallions are positioned in the red brick of most bays on all elevations of the building. The concrete foundation is exposed and elevated above grade. Verified through historic plans and oral interviews with the family of the founders of Steelcote, this foundation is a floating concrete foundation, designed as such because of the marshy character of the ground and lack of bedrock to use for the pier supports. The building was constructed in two sections, the first three floors finished in 1924 and the top two floors and penthouses added in 1929. All four elevations are similar with only minor variations to accommodate signage, freight doors and window treatments on the first floor and in the elevator/stair shaft.

Narrative Description

Centered on the façade, which faces east, there is an arched parapet extension with white glazed terra cotta coping tiles and a rectangular concrete sign panel embossed "Steelcote Mfg. Co." In the first floor of the south bay is the main entry to the building which is divided vertically by a secondary concrete pier. The north half of this bay has the typical industrial steel window with brick below and the south half has a dressed limestone surround with a limestone cornice and frieze engraved "STEELCOTE MFG. CO." Above the cornice and below the frieze the openings are filled with matching red brick and within the limestone surround are paired, wooden, single light doors with simple recessed panels below the lights. Centered in the brick above these doors is a small pendant light. Spanning across the remaining façade is a raised concrete loading dock platform, with steps along the south side, that has a corrugated metal, shed roof. The middle bay of the first floor is divided into thirds by two secondary concrete piers with steel windows flanking one of the building's freight doors. The north bay on the first floor is treated with steel windows above the brick wall common to the building.

On each side elevation, the parapet retains the black background and white lettered painted signs that span the length of the building, with the north side reading "HOME OF *Steelcote* ADHESIVES SEALANTS." The south side reads essentially the same except that the last two words are reversed. Each elevation has a freight door with a small steel industrial window above, usually separated by a concrete beam spanning the bay (in the west bay on the north elevation, the south bay on the west elevation, and in the stairwell/elevator shaft in the second bay back on the south elevation, as well as the middle bay of the façade). There is an additional overhead door in the fourth bay on the south side (but it does not have the concrete beam separating it from the steel window above). The windows in the first bay on the south serve the stairway from the main entry and second floor offices; they are small steel sashes with concrete lintels, two higher and one lower in the bay. Similarly, small windows are staggered in the stairwell/elevator shaft of the second bay with slightly larger steel sashes aligned toward the east (in the elevator shaft) and smaller windows staggered for the stair shaft. There is a man door on each floor at the west end of the north elevation that connects to the metal fire escape outside.

There are two penthouses. The stairwell/elevator shaft penthouse is located in the second bay back from the east elevation and flush with the south elevation. Unlike other elevator penthouses seen on industrial buildings, this one extends across the rooftop to the north elevation with a workroom positioned north of the actual stairwell/elevator room. It has clay coping tiles on the parapets of this flat roofed penthouse and the north end is slightly taller, with concrete pier extensions and a full bay width industrial window, aligned with the bay below. On the rooftop, the east and west walls of this penthouse have been partially coated with a stucco paint treatment, but it retains its original door openings and industrial steel windows with brick sills. The other penthouse is located in the west bay, but it does not extend completely to the north and south elevations, although it is flush with the west elevation wall. This is also a brick penthouse, with parapets (with clay coping tiles) on three sides (not the east elevation). It has three industrial windows evenly spaced on the east elevation.

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The interior of the building features poured concrete floors/ceilings and exposed concrete framing with mushroom top round columns separating each bay. The board forms used to pour the concrete slabs are still clearly delineated on the ceilings, although the concrete is now painted, creating an interesting pattern. The concrete framing and columns as well as the inside of the brick walls have all been painted (purportedly with Steelcote paints). The building retains much of its original overhead lighting (simple round metal "hats" above a bulb in a glass globe) and the sprinkler system. It even retains its original steam radiators and the piping spiders across the ceilings. The stairway in the second bay on the south side has poured concrete steps with a metal pipe rail and the door opening at each floor has the metal clad, sliding fire door. The interior walls of the stairway and elevator are poured concrete. The freight elevator doors are generally the original, corrugated metal doors that meet horizontally. There is a slightly more elaborate stairway between the ground floor and second floor at the southeast corner, but it too has poured concrete steps. The dogleg stairs railing balusters are metal and have simple steel square newel posts and a wood railing. The wall of this stairwell has a simple wood trim creating a wainscoting. Extending across most of the two bays of the east end of the second floor, adjacent to this stairway, is a wood framed room that is enclosed by wood framed, multipaned windows on the upper half of its wood walls. This room apparently served as the laboratory and offices with several small rooms subdivided inside. Much of the original machinery has not yet been cleared from the building, including: two large in floor stirring bins on the first floor, a variety of paint stirrers, overhead brackets and gears (apparently to drive machinery), and shelves and tanks.

OUTBUILDINGS (ORIGINAL VARNISH PLANT)

To the north side of the main, five story, factory are a series of small, one story outbuilding that were an integral part of the operations of the paint factory and were collectively referred to as the varnish plant. Most of the outbuildings (including the small office, the cook house, the boiler room building, and varnish tanks) appear to have been built in 1922 (when a building permit was issued for the varnish plant) but there were numerous permits issued on the property and they probably reference small additions and alterations made prior to the completion of the 1951 Sanborn fire insurance map. The original buildings on the north half of the property are clearly visible on the site plans from Helmuth and Helmuth when the main factory was built in 1924. They are all small one story, flat roofed brick buildings that frame the north and east end of the property:

- **Office, 1922.** This is a very small 1.5 story, brick, flat roofed building parallels the larger main factory (extending back less than two of its bays) at the east end and has irregularly placed small industrial steel windows. It includes a small work room which originally houses the offices, but also has two bays for storage that had large wood plank sliding doors originally.

Narrative Description

- **Cook House, 1922.** The one story brick cook house (were varnish was boiled) completed in 1922 is located at the northeast corner of the property. It is a flat roofed, L-shaped building with skylights and has three tall, square, concrete chimneys connected by a steel plate cap on the east elevation (north end) over the brick ovens on the interior. There are wooden accordion garage style doors on the south side, west end (facing the courtyard separating the outbuildings from the main factory building). The east leg of the L was added before 1951 (since it is visible on the Sanborn map that year) and is basically open on the west elevation (with sliding wood doors) but has three tiny horizontal windows on the east elevation of this shorter section, apparently used for storage originally. This building has been modified in recent years, with an overlay of brick on the lower portion of the east wall (behind the ovens) and a one room addition on the north end. This one story, flat roofed addition was probably completed after World War II given the large glazing panel on the north side and the non-matching brick used for its walls.

- **Boiler Room, 1922-1929.** Connected to this varnish plant building is a very narrow, flat roofed, one story, brick building that is deeper the north leg of the L on the varnish building and it has a freight opening on its south wall and a very tall steel chimney on the north end. This building shows up on the Helmuth and Helmuth site plan for the 1929 addition and was used as the boiler room for heating the large 5 story building as well as the storage tanks of oils in winter.

- **Tank Warehouse, 1923.** To the west of this boiler room is a larger one story, flat roofed, brick building that housed the equipment for piping the heat to the entire complex, including the five story building, but it also served as a tank warehouse. On either side (north and south) are paired, hinged, lighted, wood doors. Spanning the top of the north, south, and west elevations are small, horizontal, 3-light steel windows and there are stepped coping tile parapets on the east and west end. There are two skylights on its roof.

- **Tank House, 1922.** South of this building, at the west end of the property and north of the main factory building, is an elevated stone platform that was heated with six round steel tanks that held the raw materials for the paint varnish. Based upon permit history, it appears that the tanks themselves were replaced at least once in recent years.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

The main factory building is nearly unaltered, retaining a very high degree of historic integrity. It has a few issues due to the deterioration of the concrete frame (with exposed steel rebar) and the rusting steel window frames. It also has very few alterations, limited to concrete block infill of the middle bays on the north elevation of the first floor and the creation of a steel framed, metal

Narrative Description

enclosed overhead bridge that extends along the north elevation at the second floor level from mid building to the east across the street (to connect to the newer one and one-half story warehouse and office building finished for Steelcote in 1956). Since the 1956 building is barely 50 years old and since the innovative history and historic plant did not include this site east of the street, it is not being included in the nominated property. The bridge was completed in 1956 and was permanently blocked off at the north wall of the factory several years ago; in addition it is currently under demolition and as such is not counted as a resource. Since the property ownership is different on the two buildings, the bridge is slated for demolition. On the interior of the main factory, the only visible alterations are a few fluorescent ceiling lights, some exposed box air vents and a small metal storage room on the fourth floor. At some point, a large billboard style sign was built on top of the west penthouse proudly proclaiming "STEELCOTE."

The outbuildings, on the other hand, have deteriorated severely and are environmental problems, requiring remediation before the property can be put back into use. In addition, the one building definitely associated with the original 1922 varnish plant, the northeast corner building, has been altered along the north elevation by the newer addition. In addition, the storage tanks are rusting to the point of failure and the stone base is beginning to collapse.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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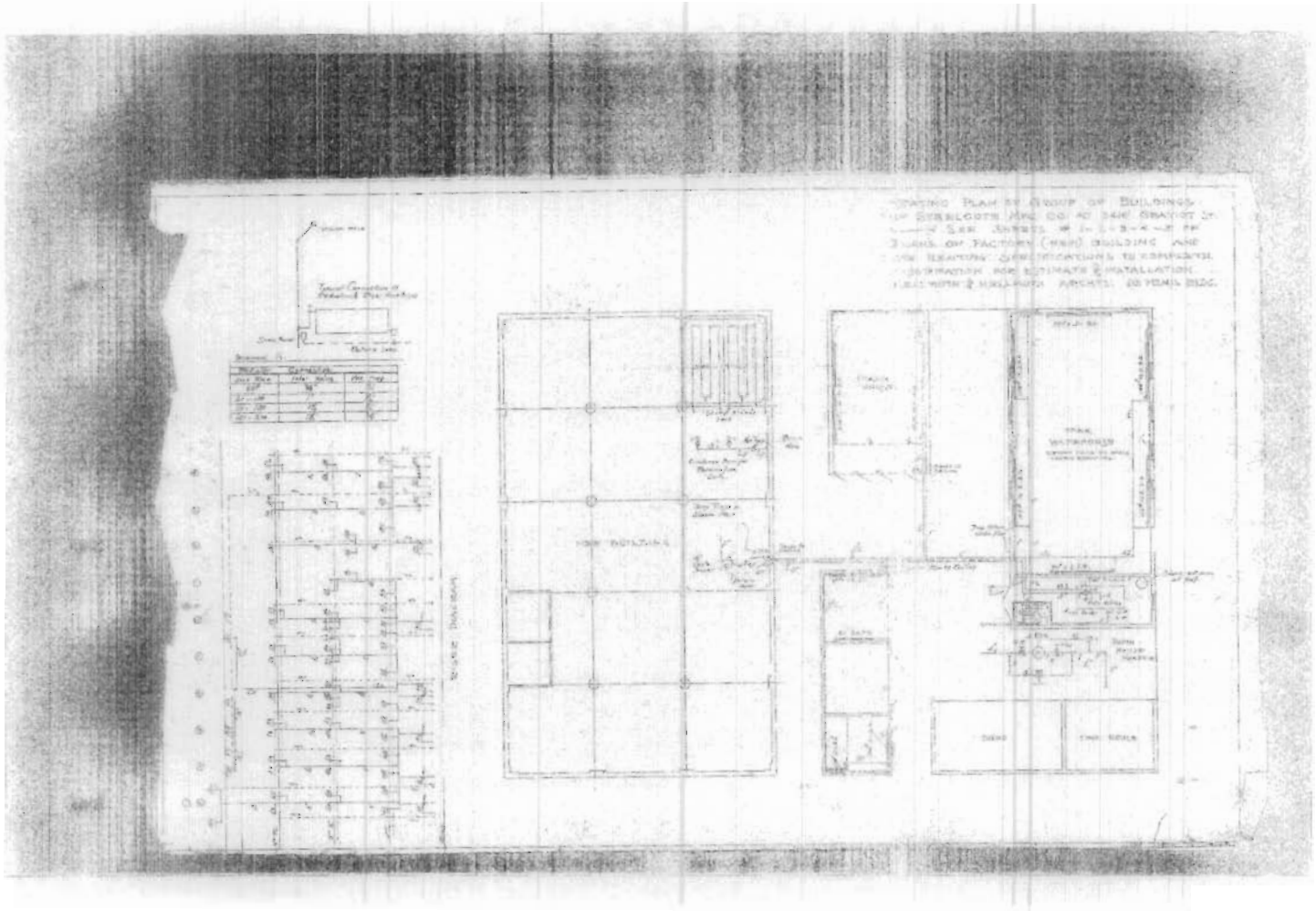
Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO

City Map Locating Property

N

Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, [1929] Site Plan, 1929



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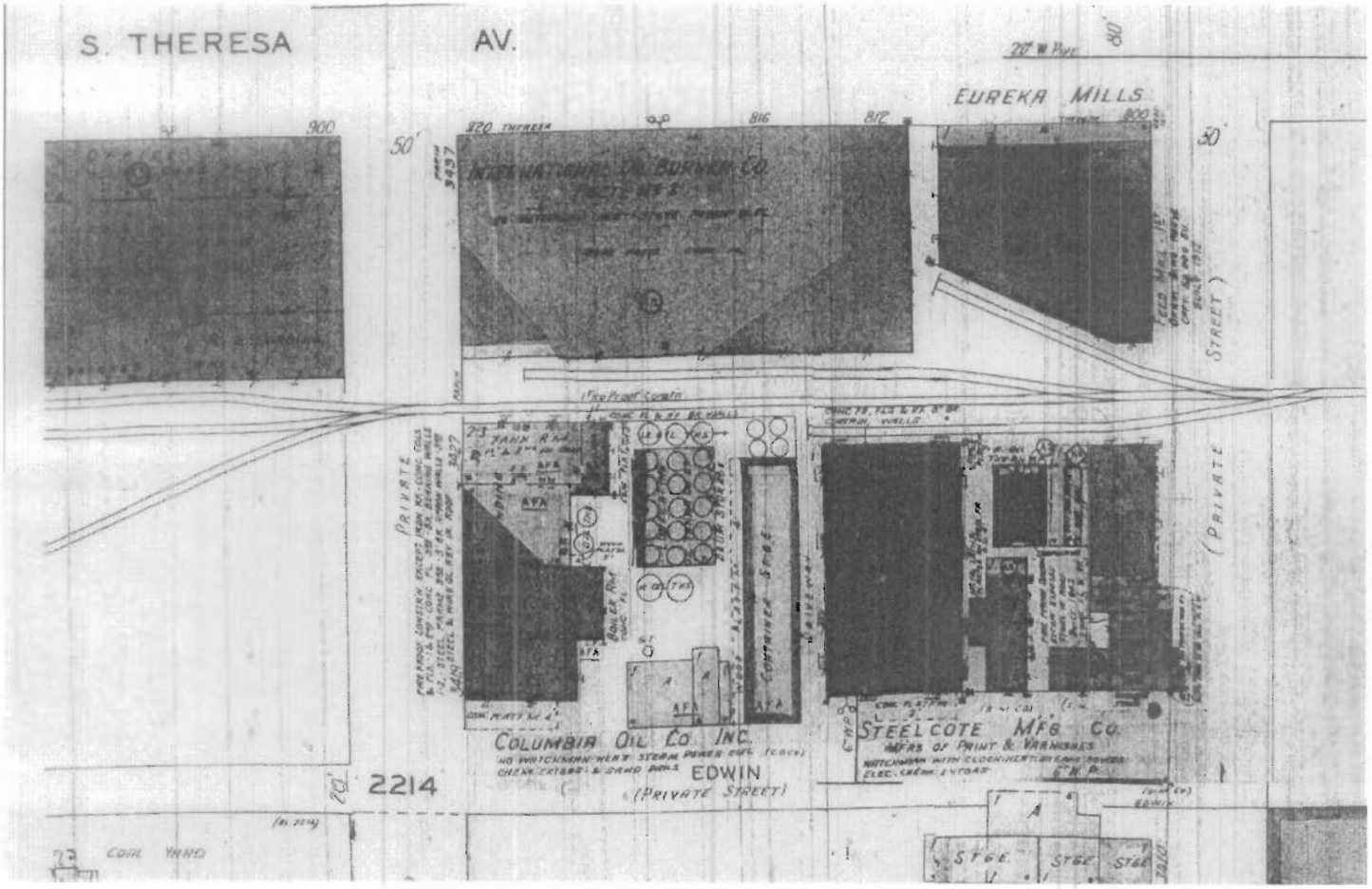
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Louis, Missouri — Site Plan of Property from 1951



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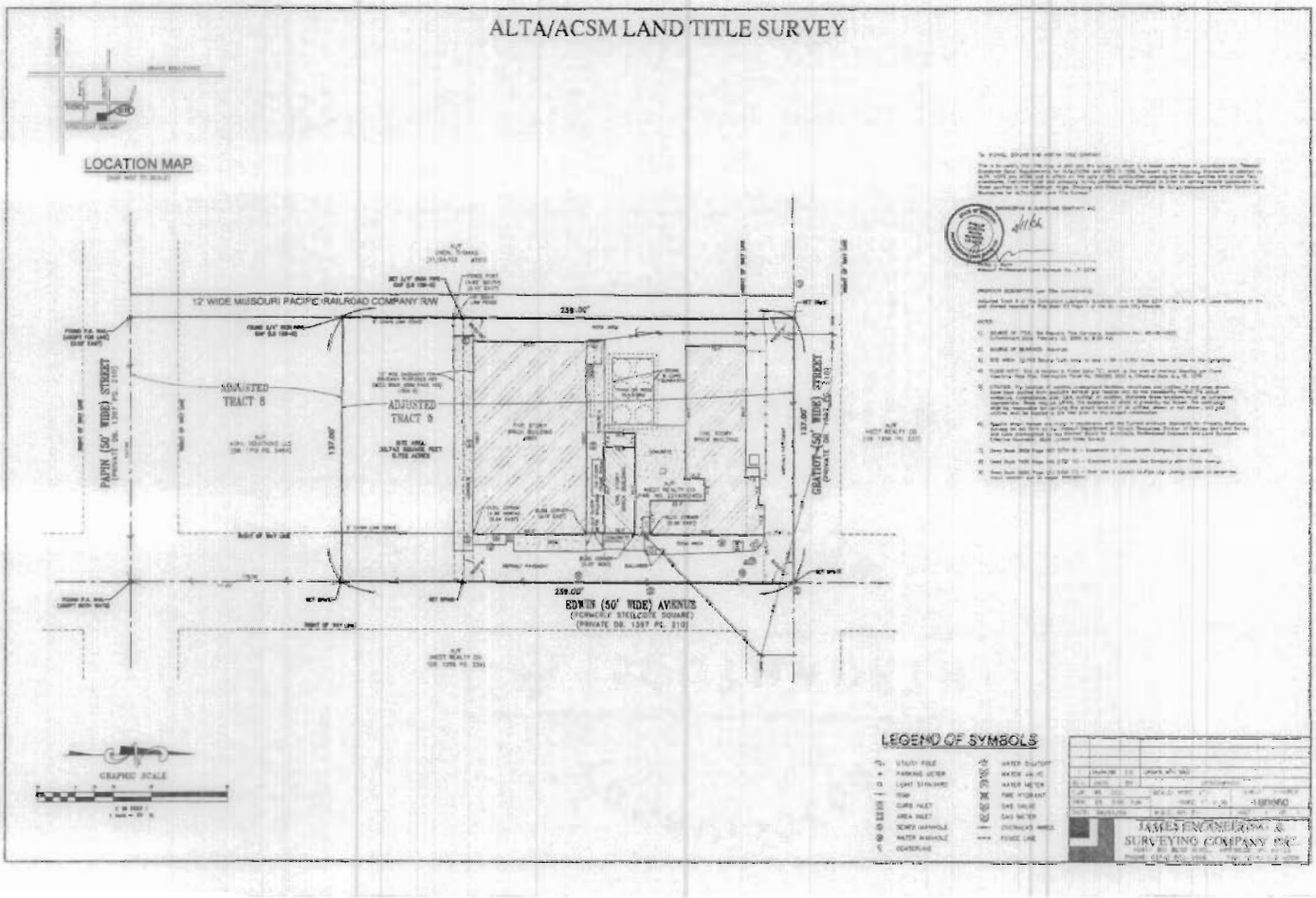
ALTA/ACSM LAND TITLE SURVEY
LOCATION MAP
12' WIDE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY R/W
ADJUSTED TRACT 8
ADJUSTED TRACT 9
PAPIN (50' WIDE) STREET
GRATIOT (50' WIDE) STREET
259.00'
137.00'
EDWIN (50' WIDE) AVENUE
(FORMERLY STEELCOTE SQUARE)
GRAPHIC SCALE
LEGEND OF SYMBOLS
JAMES ENGINEERING & SURVEYING COMPANY, INC.

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National Park Service

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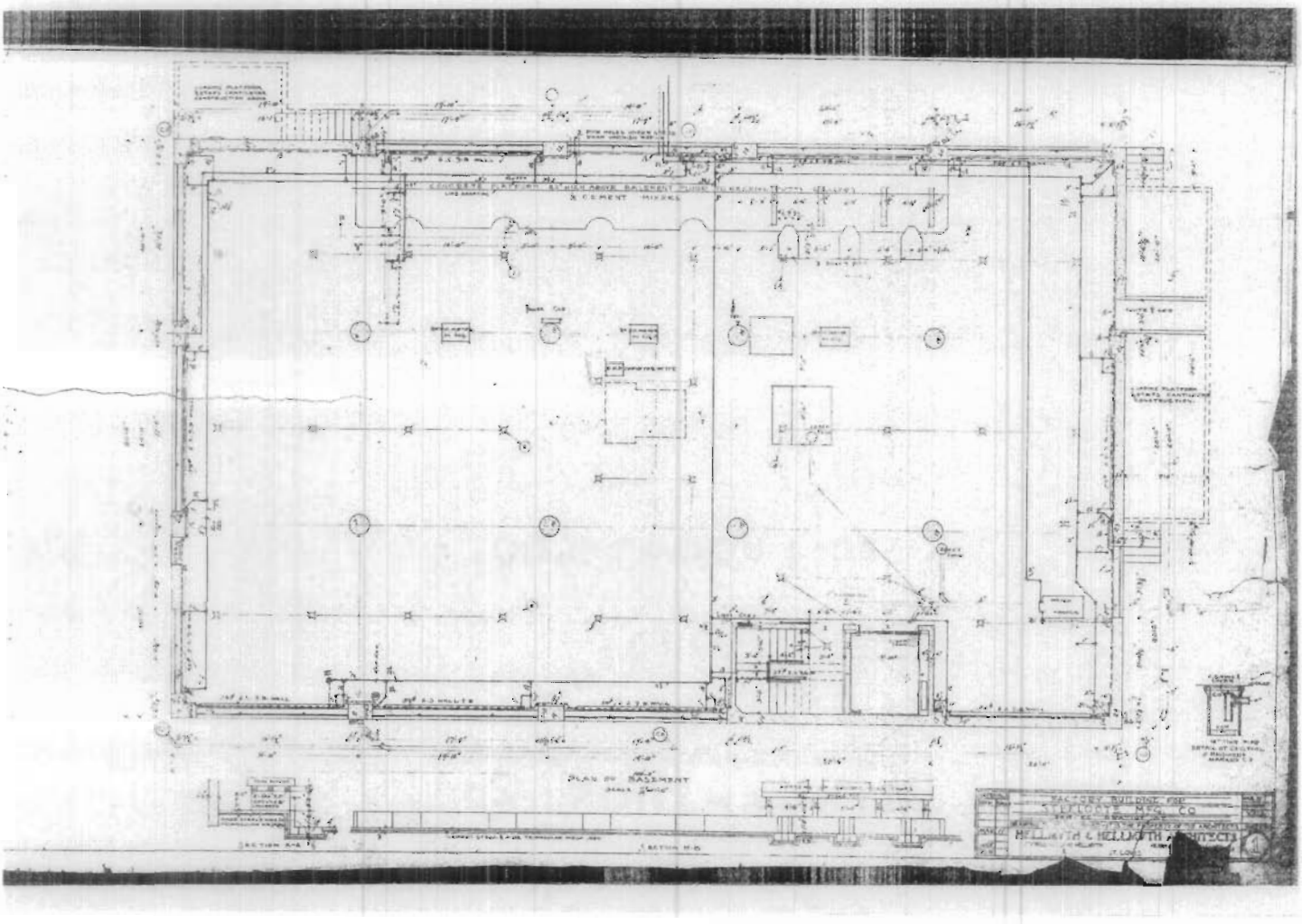
Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, 1924

Basement Floor Plan



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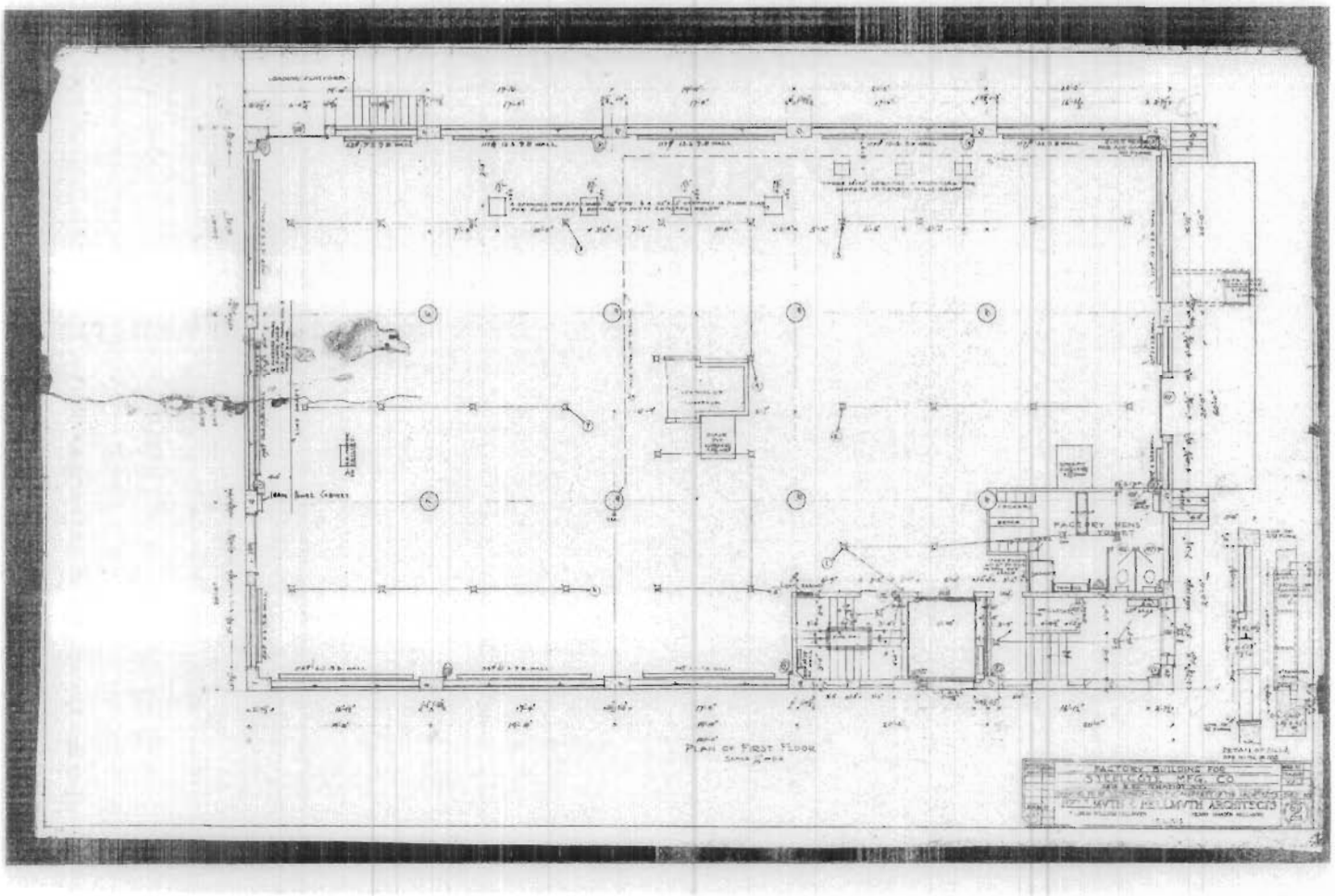
Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, 1924

1st Story Floor Plan



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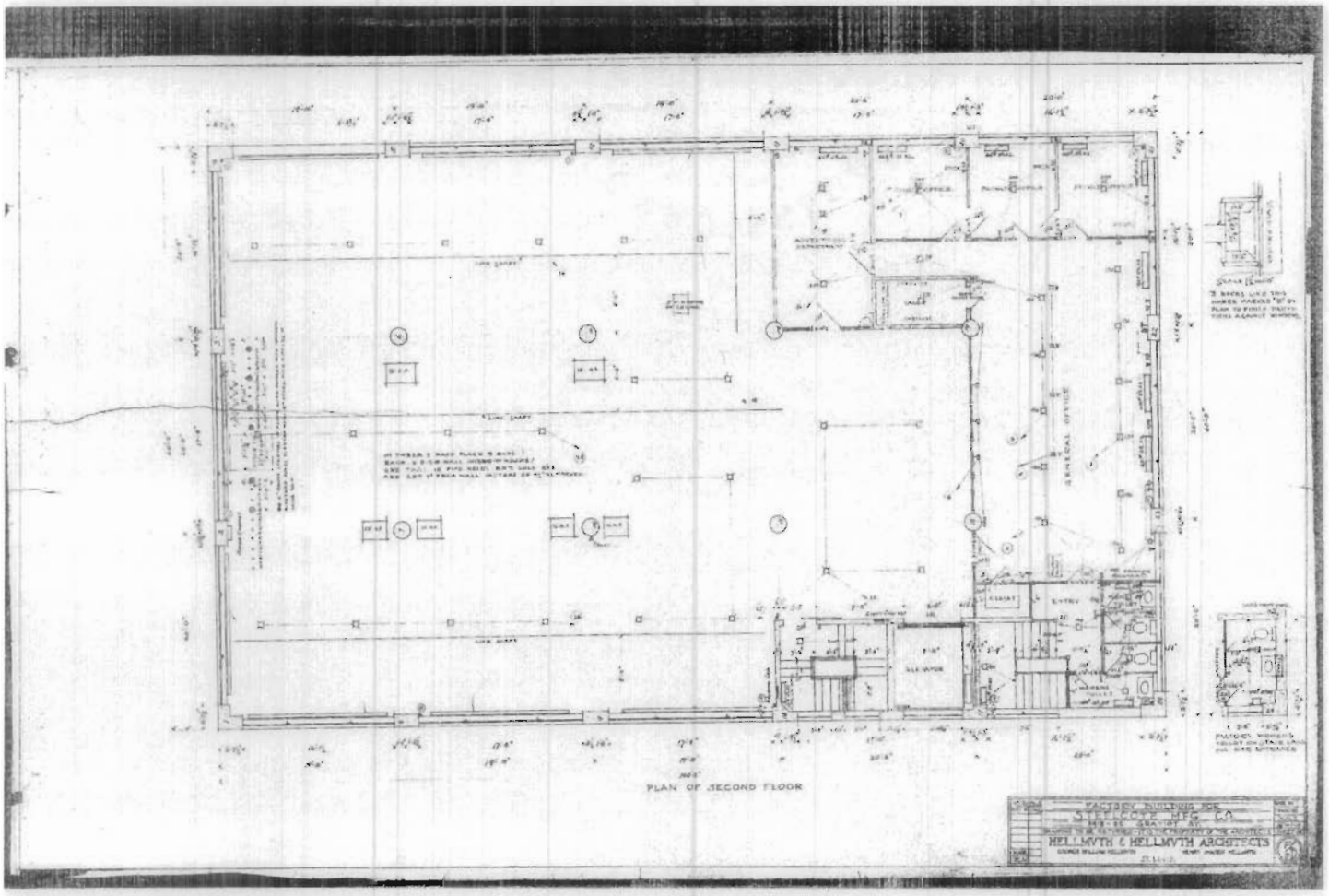
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Section number 7 Page 12

Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, 1924

2nd Story Floor Plan



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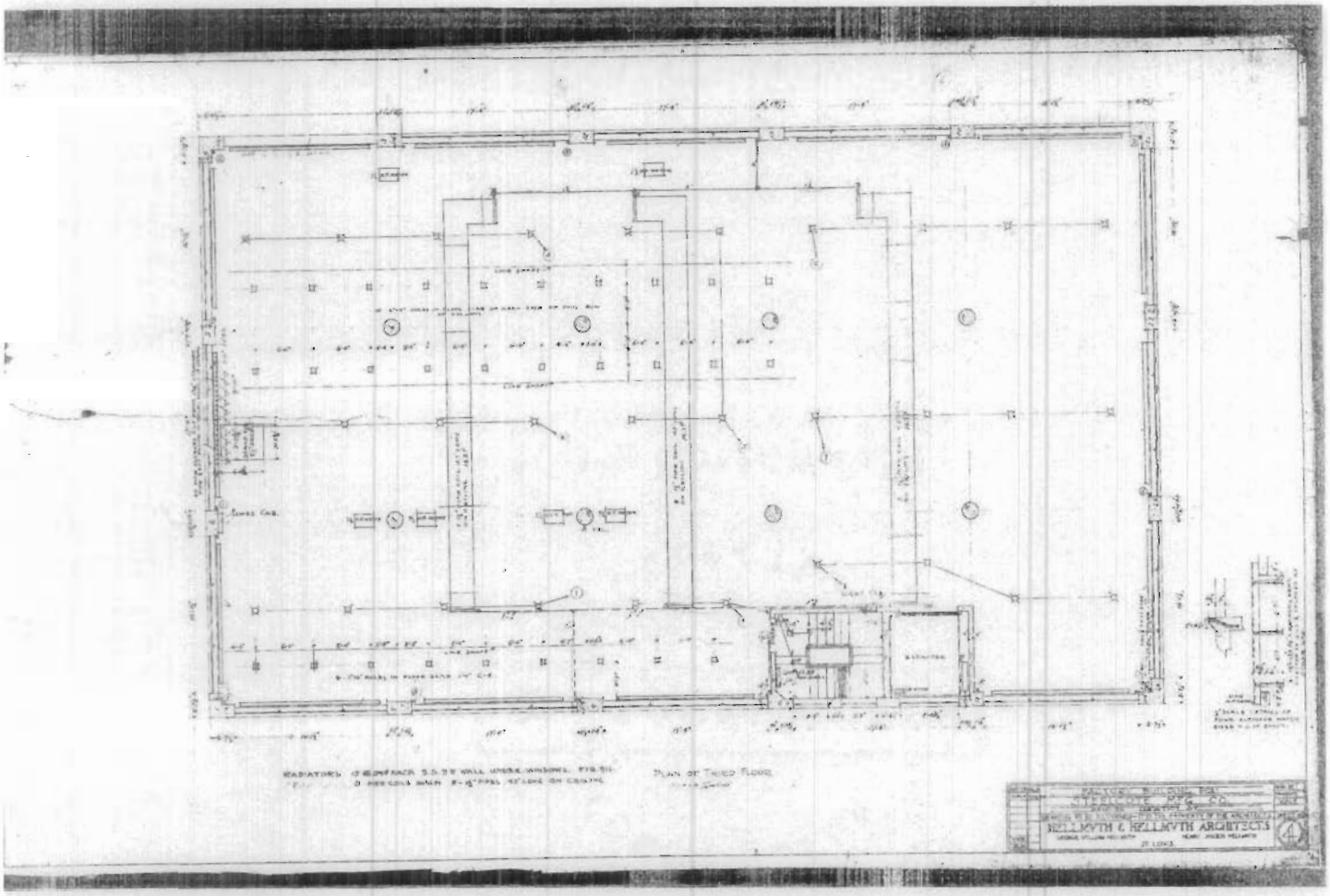
Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, [1928]

3rd Story Floor Plan



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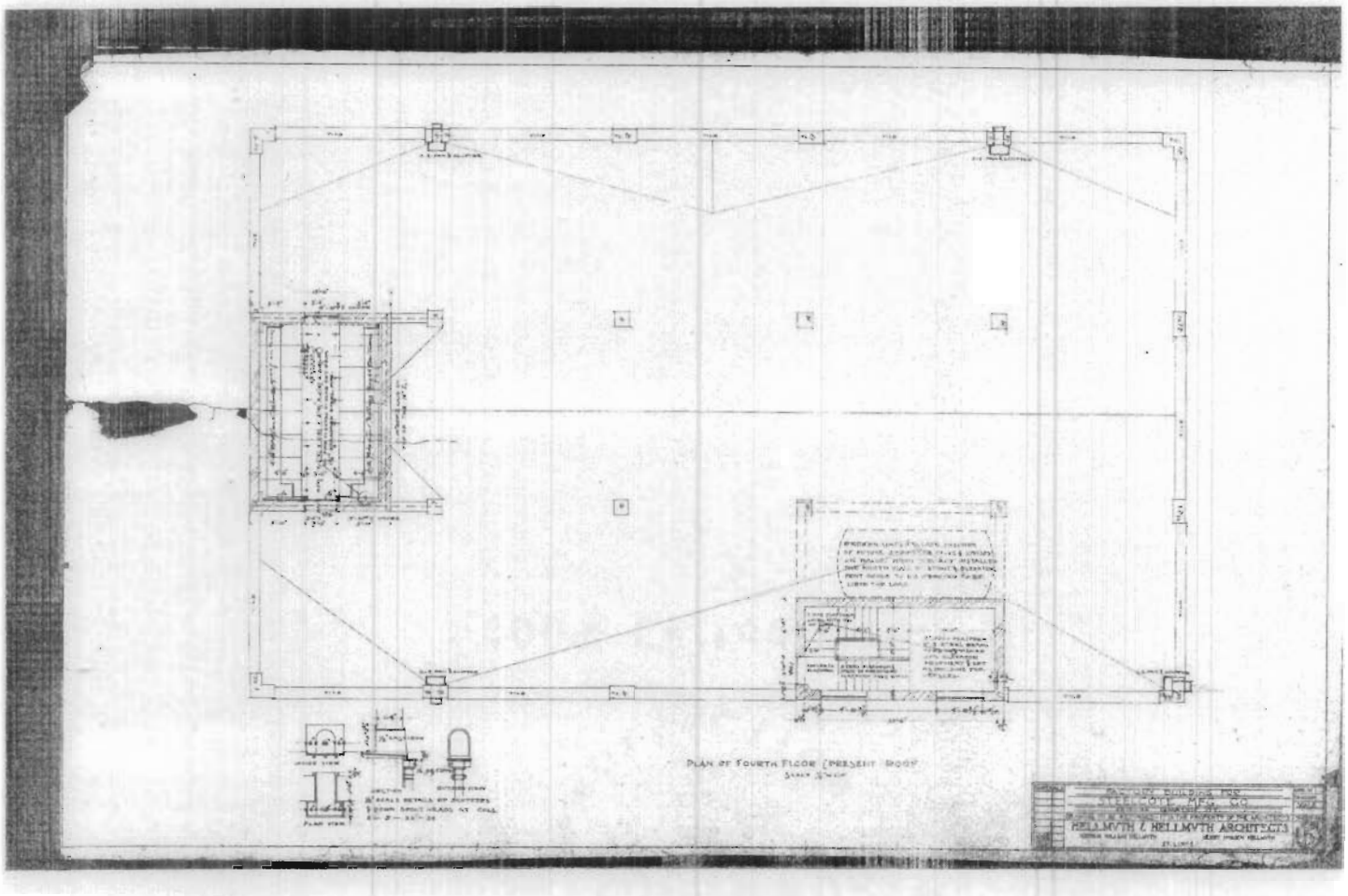
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, [1929]

4th Story Floor Plan



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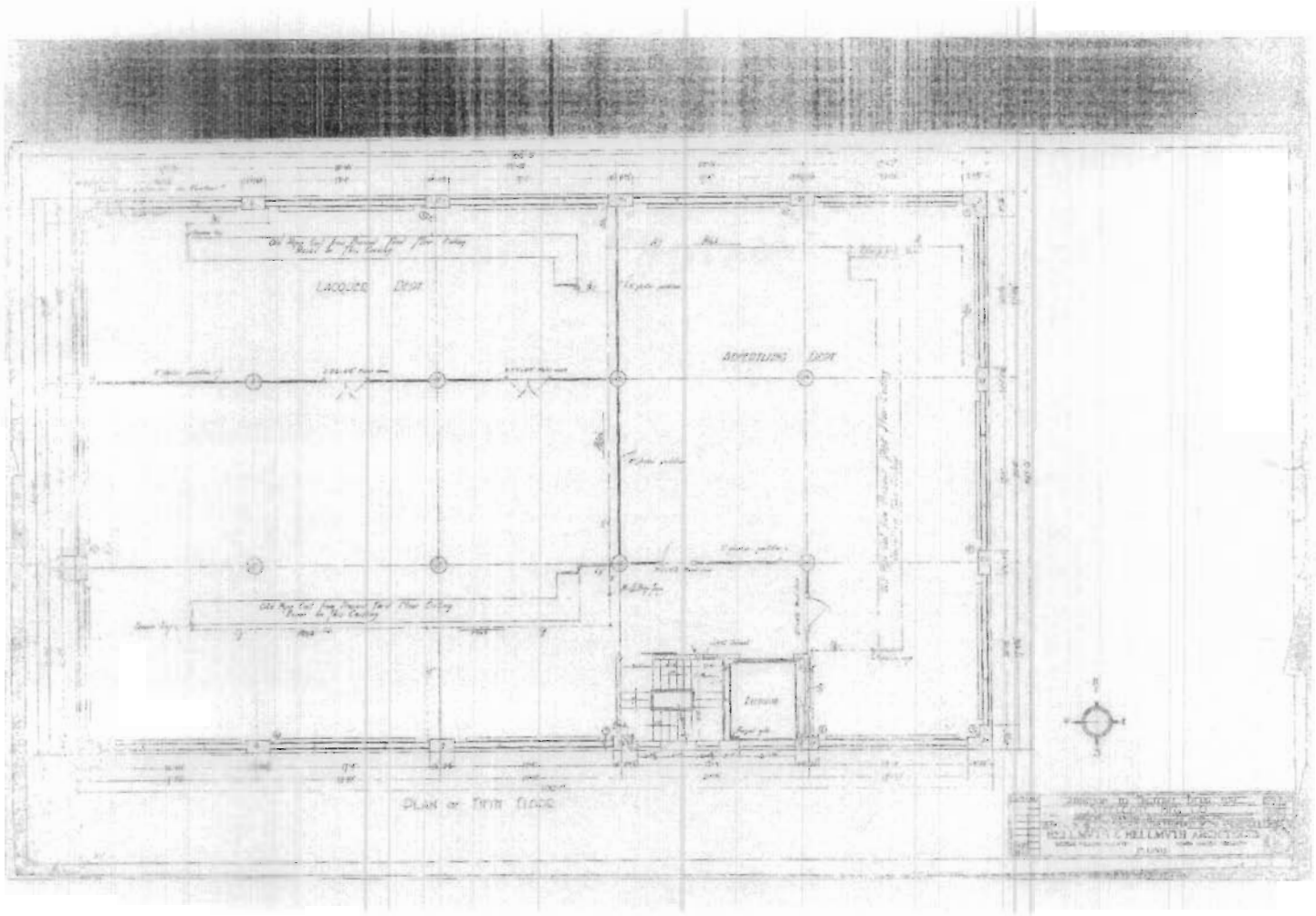
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Section number 7 Page 15

Hellmuth and Hellmuth, Architects, [1928] 5th Story Floor Plan



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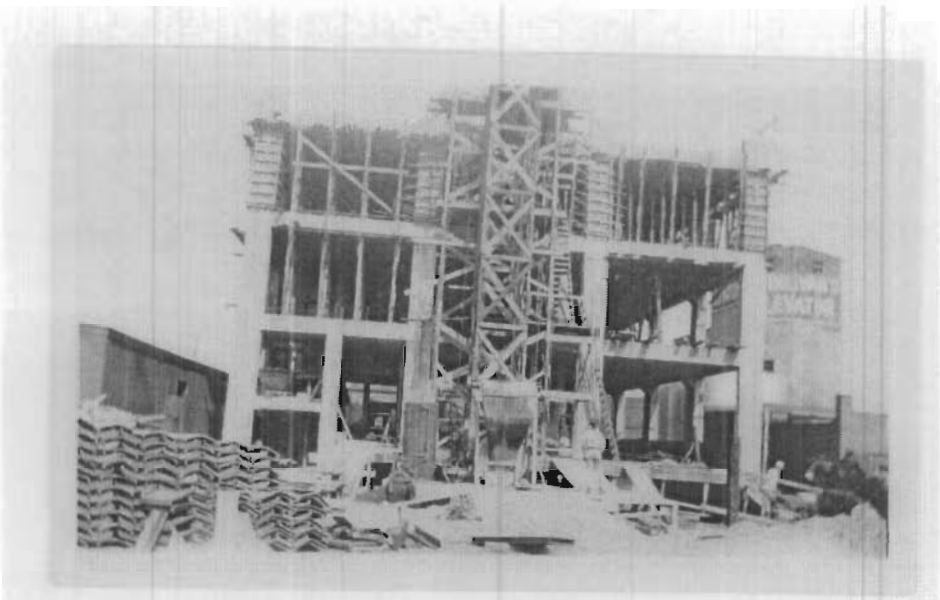
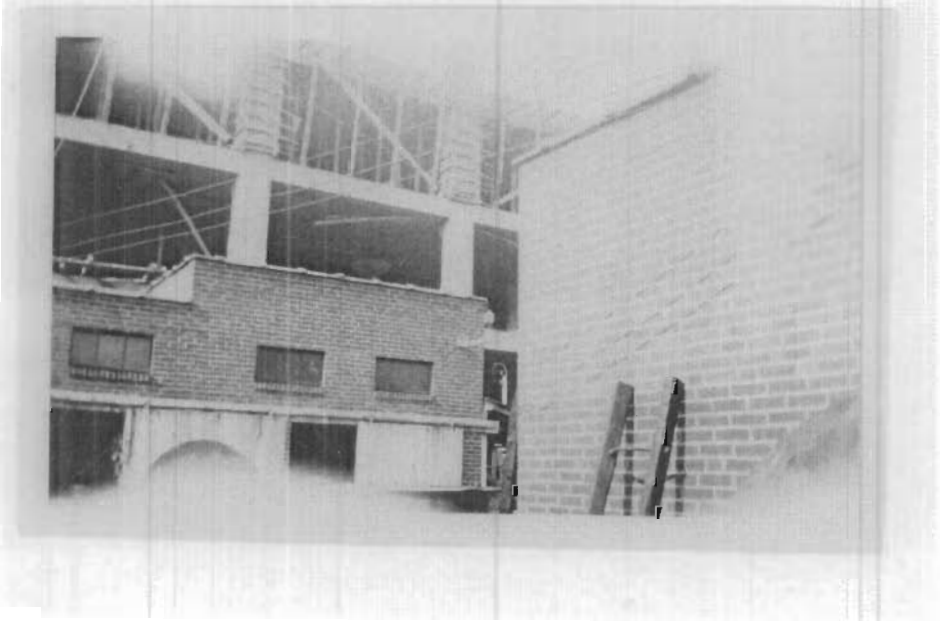
Doug Neidt Family Archives

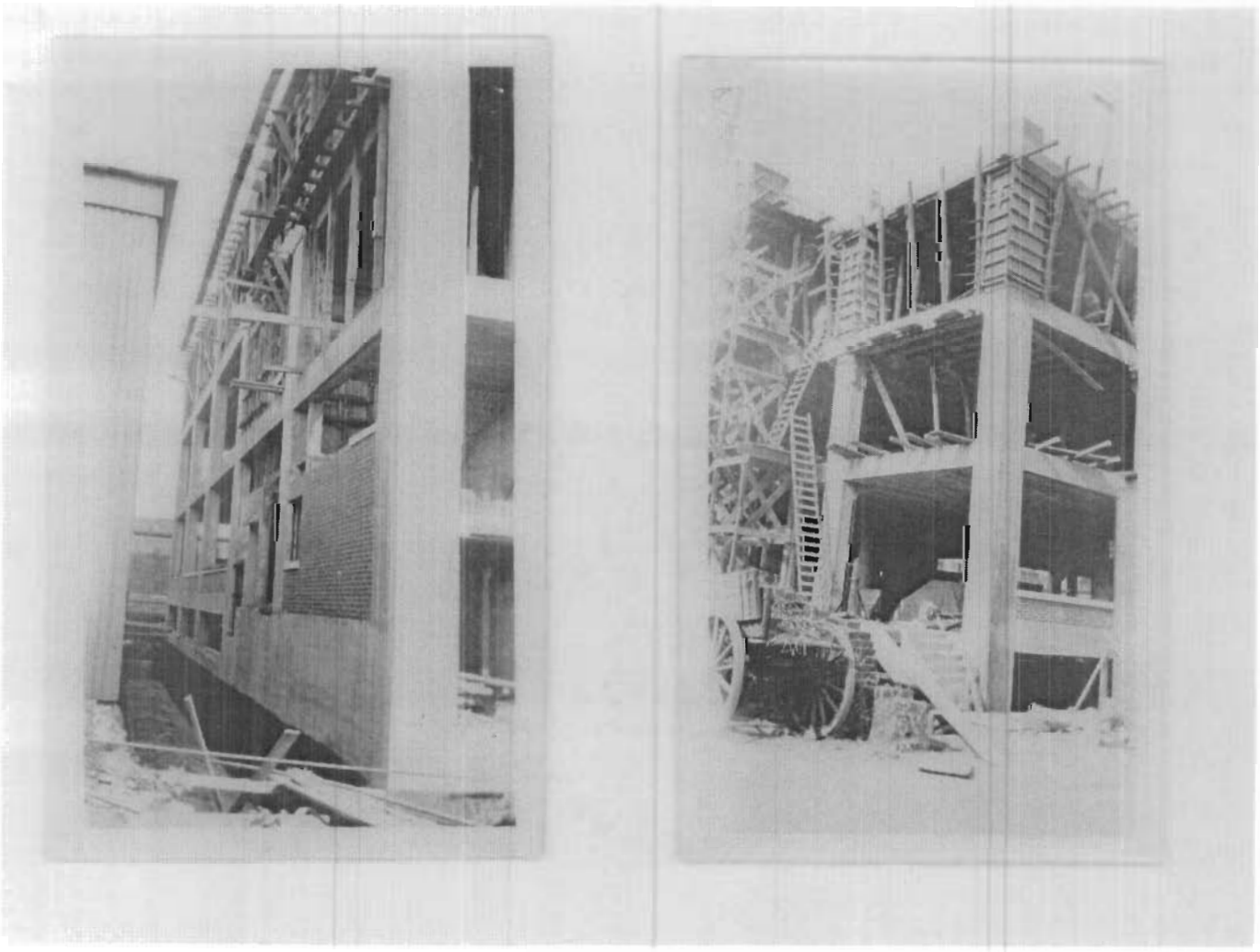
Historic Photos During Construction





Doug Neidt Family Archives

Historic Photos During Construction



Narrative Statement of Significance

INTRODUCTION

The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory, located at 801 Edwin, (also addressed as Steelcote Square Number 5 and 3418 Gratiot) St. Louis, Missouri, was completed between 1922 and 1929 as the fourth and final factory for the Steelcote Manufacturing Company. The small buildings at the north end of the property, known collectively as the Varnish Plant, were finished in 1922 and 1923 and the large factory building on the south end of the complex was built first as a three story building in 1924 with two more floors added in 1929, both designed by Helmuth and Helmuth Architects and built by Joseph Bright Construction Company.[1] The Steelcote Manufacturing Company was an innovator in the paint industry, inventing the first rubberized paints and later the first paints with fungicides, among other advances. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company, which was based solely in St. Louis throughout its existence as an independent company, was an international leader in its field. As such the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory, the only remaining extant site of the four Steelcote Manufacturing Company sites, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: Industry and Invention. In addition the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory was designed by the renowned architectural firm of Hellmuth and Hellmuth. Hellmuth and Hellmuth was founded by brothers George and Garry Hellmuth, a firm that evolved into today's internationally renowned St. Louis architectural firm of Hellmuth Obata and Kassabaum, better known as HOK. In addition to the numerous architectural significant buildings designed by Hellmuth and Hellmuth, the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory has the additional importance the engineering used in the building. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory rests in the Mill Creek Valley, which has sandy and swampy land and the floating foundation allows the building to retain a solid foundation despite the swampy lands. Based upon the company founders' family history, it is thought to be the first building in St. Louis to be constructed with a floating foundation, and is at a minimum one of the earliest examples of this technique. Because of its floating foundation designed by the esteemed firm of Hellmuth and Hellmuth, the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C: Architecture and Engineering. The period of significance extends from the initial construction of the plant at the site in 1922 through 1955 at which time the original plant was supplemented with a new warehouse and office across the street.

MILL CREEK VALLEY

The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory is located in Mill Creek Valley. The Mill Creek Valley is an area in midtown St. Louis, a few miles southwest of downtown. It was named for a small creek that ran through a swampy valley that separated St. Louis from the east to the west as far as Vandeventer Avenue. The area was originally a fashionable place of residence in the mid-nineteenth century, but by the beginning of the twentieth century it was starting to become a mixed use district, with residences, commercial businesses, factories, and entertainment venues all located in the area.[2]

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Mill Creek Valley became an important industrial center for St. Louis as the industrial core moved away from the riverfront and west along the railroad lines that ran through the valley. Because the area had traditionally been underutilized despite the fact that it was in the middle of the city, the railroad companies used the valley to lay their tracks into the city. The rail lines traveling out of the city to the west left Union Station (after it was opened in 1894) and traveled through the Mill Creek Valley, while eastbound trains also entered the city through the Mill Creek Valley. The placement of the train tracks increased the industrial presence in the Mill Creek Valley, leading to its mixed use development in the 1900s.[3] The natural conditions of the land (low, swampy ground) combined with the presence of the train tracks to make the land in the area cheap and desirable for industrial buildings. The Mill Creek Valley offered the Steelcote Manufacturing Company a location close to the railroad tracks, making shipments of raw materials easy to receive and delivery of finished paints just as convenient.

As the century progressed, the area became a significant African American neighborhood, and by 1954, the area had over twenty thousand people crowded into the residences in the Mill Creek Valley, 95 percent of whom were African American.[4] In 1959, parts of the Mill Creek Valley were cleared to make room for the Daniel Boone Expressway (U.S. Highway 64), just north of the railroad tracks and the Steelcote factory. During the 1960s the area was also targeted for urban redevelopment programs during which almost all of the residential buildings were razed and many of the industrial buildings as well. After the highway and the efforts of redevelopment, the area was left with many empty lots with the occasional industrial building and the even more rare residential buildings as a reminder of its legacy.

HELLMUTH AND HELLMUTH

The geography of the Mill Creek Valley also led to a new architectural technique being used on the building. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory is believed to be the first known building in St. Louis built with a floating foundation, and was designed by Hellmuth and Hellmuth, a renowned St. Louis architectural firm. The firm was founded by brothers George and Harry Hellmuth. The firm did much of its work in St. Louis, including many notable local religious buildings, houses, and factory and office buildings. Among the most notable buildings are St. Mark's Evangelical Church, the Chapels of the Pink Sisters, #10 Hortense Place, the Fur Exchange Building, and "The Woodlands." Later, Hellmuth and Hellmuth dissolved and George Hellmuth formed Hellmuth, Yamasaki, and Leinweber, which in turn became Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, better known as HOK, an internationally recognized architectural firm today. The successor firms have designed such notable buildings as Lambert airport, the Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) Airport, the first building at SIUE, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, the McDonnell Planetarium (now part of the St. Louis Science Center), the Priory Church, Marion Federal Penitentiary and the new Busch Stadium.[5] Other notable local designs include the Sanitol Chemical Laboratory Company (now the Crown Lofts), the Church of the Little Flower, and a number of other religious buildings. In addition the firm designed the monument for the Vicksburg Memorial.

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Hellmuth and Hellmuth's innovative designs have inspired almost a century of architectural firms that bear the Hellmuth name and continue to develop new designs for major institutions. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory was itself an innovative design. The building was constructed with a floating foundation. The area where the building was constructed, in the Mill Creek Valley, included a creek surrounded by swampy lands before it was drained for the railroads. The land remained swampy and reaching bedrock was prohibitive. To combat these problems, Hellmuth and Hellmuth turned to a technique developed by the Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root. John Root and Daniel Burnham were the Chicago architects who oversaw the construction of the 1893 Columbia Exposition (although Root died before the Fair opened), a position the firm earned in part because of its innovative designs and new structural techniques.[6] Chicago was a challenging city to build in, with a soil that was a mixture of water saturated clay and sand that did not hold weight well. The bedrock was 125 feet below ground, and there were no economically viable techniques to drive pillars that deep to support the foundation. Previously, architects conquered this problem in tall buildings by erecting pyramids of stone on the basement slab to support the structural columns of the building and which effectively eliminated any functional use of the basement, because the wide pyramid bases filled the basement. Root's technique was to dig through the porous soil until the first reasonably firm layer of soil. At this level, a concrete pad was laid. Workers then set down a layer of steel rails stretching across the pad, with a second layer laid perpendicular on top of the first. Multiple layers of steel created a grillage that was then filled and covered with Portland cement to create a rigid raft that Root called a floating foundation.[7]

Hellmuth and Hellmuth used a variation of this technique in the construction of the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory. The building's foundation had four feet of concrete, larger than would normally be necessary for a five story building, increasing the footprint and creating a raft similar to the one's Burnham and Root used on their earlier projects. The foundation acts as a boat, allowing the building to float on top of the loose soil and drainage in the Mill Creek Valley and also successfully resist the vibrations created by the heavy mixing machinery that would be operating in the building. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory is believed to be the first building with a floating foundation in St. Louis.

PAINT INDUSTRY IN ST. LOUIS

Early in St. Louis's history, the precursors to the mixed paint industry began in St. Louis. As early as 1816, there are reports that a "Mr. Wilt" began construction on a white lead factory, a key ingredient in making lead paint. The natural lead deposits in Missouri insured a continuous supply of soft lead well suited for carbonating, the process to make white lead for paints.[8] A company founded by two doctors, Dr. Hoffman and Dr. Reid, had started an experimental factory that increased the value of white lead production.[9]

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Despite these developments, there was no true paint industry in the United States. People needed paint had to mix the ingredients themselves by hand. It was not until 1867 when Allen Vane, a Maryland native who had moved to St. Louis and started a ship chandlery store selling boat supplies, including paint, developed the idea of selling pre-mixed cans of paint and founded the Vane-Calvert Paint Company.[10] With the formation of the Vane-Calvert Paint Company the paint industry as it is known today was born and the first pre-mixed paints were available to the public.

By the end of the nineteenth century, St. Louis was becoming a national leader in the paint industry. The soft lead found in Missouri, combined with other mineral deposits across the southern parts of the state, insured St. Louis paint manufacturers a convenient and reliable supply of materials.[11] By 1890, the St. Louis paint industry was producing $3,766,000 worth of paint and linseed oil annually.[12] As St. Louis's economy continued to grow, becoming the "Fourth City," in United States industry the paint industry continued its success. By 1920, St. Louis was producing $27,000,000 of paint, paint oil, and white lead products, out of a national total of approximately $300,000,000.[13] By the early 1920s, St. Louis was also becoming an important center for zinc oxide production, another component in paints and an alternative to white lead.[14] St. Louis had regional sources of both white lead and zinc oxide, making St. Louis not only a leader in paint, but also in the raw materials to make paint. The growth of the St. Louis paint market also led St. Louis to be a leading warehousing site of linseed oil and flaxseed oil, making St. Louis an important distribution point for those products as well.[15] In addition, St. Louis was also a major manufacturing site for all of the inert pigments used in paints, linoleum, and even wallpapers. Despite these advances, St. Louis was not a major producer of varnish prior to 1920.[16] One of the first major varnish producers in St. Louis was Steelcote , after opening the varnish plant in 1922. St. Louis was also the publishing home of the *American Paint Journal* and the *American Paint and Oil Dealer.* Allen W. Clark, the editor of the *American Paint and Oil Dealer* was the originator of the "clean-up and paint-up" idea that became a national trend for a time in the 1920s, superseding six day efforts previously known as "cleanup week," which in 1921 where being conducted annually in over 7,000 cities and towns.

STEELCOTE HISTORY

The Steelcote Manufacturing Company was founded in 1915 in a storefront at the corner of Commercial and Vine by two brothers, George and Anthony Niedt.[17] The company started as a small paint store where the two brothers would mix the paint themselves in the backroom of the store.[18] Within a year, the company had grown enough to require a larger store, and in 1916 the Steelcote Manufacturing Company had moved into a three-story warehouse located at 313 North First Street, tripling the size of the business.[19] That same year, on July 1, 1916, Anthony and George Neidt drew up a single page partnership agreement.[20] The Steelcote Manufacturing

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Company continued its tremendous growth, and just three short years later in 1919, the company was looking for more room. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company moved to a new larger, office, plant and warehouse located at 700-706 North First Street, doubling their available space.[21] Two years later, in 1921, the Steelcote purchased the adjoining building, allowing further growth.[22] The next year, in 1922, Steelcote continued to expand and began construction a collection of small buildings known as the varnish plant in the 800 block of Edwin Avenue, in the Mill Creek Valley, the first section of the current plant complex.[23] The previous sites are all non-extant, leaving Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory and complex as the only extant site connected with this innovative company.

Shortly after the construction of the varnish plant, the Neidt brothers realized that the company needed even more room, so plans were made to consolidate the company on a single site with the manufacturing plant, research and development department, and the offices all in a single location. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company took out building permits for a three story factory in 1924, completing the three story building later that same year.[24] The new building meant Steelcote has all its buildings on a single site, with the factory next to the varnish plant and offices and research laboratories in the factory building. The complex was right next to the railroad tracks, making it easy for the company to not only ship finished paints out, but also deliver the oils, pigments, and binders used to make the paints. The growth of the company continued and within five years of completing the building, a new building permit was taken out at the end of 1928.[25] Hellmuth and Hellmuth once again were hired to design and oversee the addition of two stories to the building, making it the five story-building it is today. The final building in the complex was completed in 1956, but since the innovative history and historic plant did not include this site east of the street, it is not being included in the nominated property.

The Steelcote Manufacturing Company retained local control over its products. When it expanded the size of the business, it simply expanded the size of the factory rather than build new plants elsewhere. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company also relied on salesmen working for the company, selling directly to large, mainly industrial, purchasers. The company would ship the paints and epoxies with all the necessary instructions for proper application, and the purchaser applied the products themselves. The tight-knit business model allowed the company to survive the shift away from home paints, where it would have to compete with companies like Sherwin-Williams and Dutchboy. Instead, the company focused on manufacturers, restaurants and other businesses that require specially developed paints for specific purposes, such as the less brittle paint needed in the young auto industry, the mold resistant coating needed for banana warehouses, and later, the Steelcote paint on the gantries NASA uses to launch the shuttle.[26] The company remained at the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory until the company was sold in 1992.

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The company was able to remain in the same location despite its success because there was room to expand on the block where the varnish plant and paint factory were located. By the 1960s, the complex consisted of a number of buildings, each used for a special purpose. Building Number 1 was where the paints were actually blended and mixed. Building Number 2 housed an office in the corner and the pumping equipment used to move the liquids to the top of the factory before they were gravity fed down the floors over the course of the mixing process. Building Number 3 held the tanks for all of the oils used to blend the paints and a furnace that heated all the buildings. Building Number 4 was partially buried and housed both tanks and pumps. Building Number 5 had all of the instruments for cooking, air handling, pumping, and other control aspects of the paint mixing process. Building Number 6 was the varnish plant and has three large smoke stacks that were used while cooking varnish.

In 1924, the Steelcote Manufacturing Company not only moved into its new factory, it also expanded its business markets.[27] The company began to advertise nationally and started making its first international sales as well. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company was able to grow quickly and expand into an international company in less than ten years because Steelcote was an industry innovator.[28] The Neidt brothers had started the business making the paint themselves in the backroom of their store. In order to compete more effectively, they experimented with new mixes of paint to provide new properties, colors, and characteristics for different uses. The first major innovation the Steelcote Manufacturing Company developed was a rubberized paint.[29] The secret to the rubberized paint was to add finely ground Brazilian crepe rubber during the mixing of the paint. The paint was added to a centrifuge to remove the extra rubber and the resulting product was a flexible enamel paint that could be bent and struck without chipping. This innovation quickly took off, in part because of the growth of another development in the United States: the automobile. Existing automotive paints were usually made of lacquer, which faded quickly in sunlight, but alkoid-resin based alternatives were brittle and would pop and chip off easily.[30] Steelcote's rubberized paints filled the need for a new car paint and Steelcote was selling rubberized paint for $2 a quart throughout the country and in 28 foreign countries.[31]

By the early 1950s, other major paint companies, such as Sherwin-Williams and Dutchboy, were dominating the market in interior home paints, so the company decided to specialize by offering products for use in particular situations.[32] To succeed in this endeavor, Steelcote began to create even more specific products like the rubberized paint. One of the first products, which had been invented even before the company specialized in different paint compounds, was a paint with a fungicide imbedded in it. This paint, called Damptex was useful in the food industry, bottling plants, and other areas where there was a lot of moisture and a risk of mold and fungus growth.[33] The success of Damptex gave the Steelcote Manufacturing Company a new direction that allowed the company to survive and thrive despite the new competition. Steelcote began to develop other specialty paints throughout the rest of the century. The Steelcote Manufacturing Company went on to developed a paint that did not use lead carbonate, the toxic ingredient in "lead-based" paints (the paints are still oil based, the lead was in the pigment). Instead, Steelcote

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

used a zinc additive for the pigments that not only was non-toxic, but was also more resistant to corrosion, adding to the paint's benefits, among other new developments.[34] The company also expanded into other products such as epoxies, non-toxic and non-caustic coatings, tank linings (water and storage tanks), and epoxies and paints that would "dry" underwater. The company even developed the paint used on the gantries for the space shuttle launches at Cape Canaveral. The company had to develop a paint that could withstand the extreme cold from some of the fuels and the corrosive chemicals combined with the Florida weather, and still survive the extreme heat generated during a shuttle launch. Other Steelcote paints, many developed as early as the 1940s, were resistant to gas, acidic fumes, fatty acids, and alkalis and they developed Plytex, an exterior asbestos siding paint. These paints were sold to dairy, meat packing, and other food packing companies, as well as pool coatings, waterproofing compounds, marine epoxies, urethane, and polysulfide coatings, and some general paints for home and industry.[36] The company even developed agents for patching concrete, such as Nu-Wall, used on the lock and dam just north of St. Louis on the Mississippi River, and repair products used on the University City lion statues.[35] These specialty paints allowed Steelcote continue success through the end of the century, developing, manufacturing and selling new products into the end of the twentieth century. In the 1990s, the Steelcote Manufacturing Company was sold to a South African company, which closed the Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory. The new owners continue to make paints under the Steelcote name in its own factories. Although the Steelcote Manufacturing Company no longer exists as an independent company, the Steelcote name lives on and many of its products, including Nu-Wall and Nu-Floor, are still marketed and retain the Steelcote name.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 5 October 1922, 4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 24 March 1923, 4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 4 April 1924,4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 31 December 1928,4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 1 January 1929, 4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 23 March 1946, 4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 13 April 1946, 4; "Building News, Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record,* 17 June 1948.

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

[2]Ron Fagerstrom, *Mill Creek Valley, a Soul of Saint Louis* (St. Louis: Self Published, 2000), 20.

[3] Lewis F, Thomas, "The Localization of Business Activities in Metropolitan St. Louis," *Washington Universities Studies—New Series, Social and Philosophical Sciences* (St. Louis) No. 1 (1927): 53.

[4]Fagerstrom, 22.

[5] "Hellmuth and Hellmuth," Fine Arts Clipping Files, St. Louis Public Library, St. Louis, Missouri.,

[6] Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City,* (New York: Vintage Books: 2003), 25.

[7]Ibid., 24-25.

[8] William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, "Paints and Oils," *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis (Vol. III),* (St. Louis: The Southern History Company. 1899), 1357.

[9]Ibid.

[10] "Experts Term St. Louis the Future Great Paint Industries Manufacturing Center of the United States," *Greater St. Louis: The Official Bulletin of the Chamber of Commerce* (February, 1921), 28.

[11]Hyde and Conrad, 1356-57.

[12]Ibid.

[13] "Experts Term St. Louis the Future Great Paint Industries Manufacturing Center," 1.

[14] Ibid., 2.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Interview with Doug Neidt Conducted by Karen Bode Baxter and Timothy P. Maloney, Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory, St. Louis, Missouri, 27 May, 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt Conducted by Karen Bode Baxter and Timothy P. Maloney, Neidt Residence, St. Louis, Missouri, 6 April 2006; "Transcript of Steelcote Story," 1965, Corporation and Industry Collection, Missouri Historical Society, 2.

[18] Interview with Doug Neidt, 27 May 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt, 6 April 2006.

[19] "Transcript of Steelcote Story," 2.

[20] Interview with Doug Neidt, 27 May 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt, 6 April 2006; Private Collection of Doug Neidt, St. Louis, Missouri.

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

[21] "Transcript of Steelcote Story," 2.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.; Interview with Doug Neidt, 27 May 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt, 6 April 2006.

[24] "Building News, Building Permits," 31 December 1928,4.

[25] "Building News: Brick Building Permits," 4 April 1924, 4.

[26] "Steelcote Catalog 65," 1965 [cover, interior note referencing cover], Private Collection of Doug Neidt, St. Louis, Missouri; Interview with Doug Neidt, 27 May 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt, 6 April 2006.

[27] "Transcript of Steelcote Story," 2.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Interview with Doug Neidt, 27 May 2005; Interview with Doug Neidt, 6 April 2006.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.; "Steelcote Catalog 65," 1965.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 27

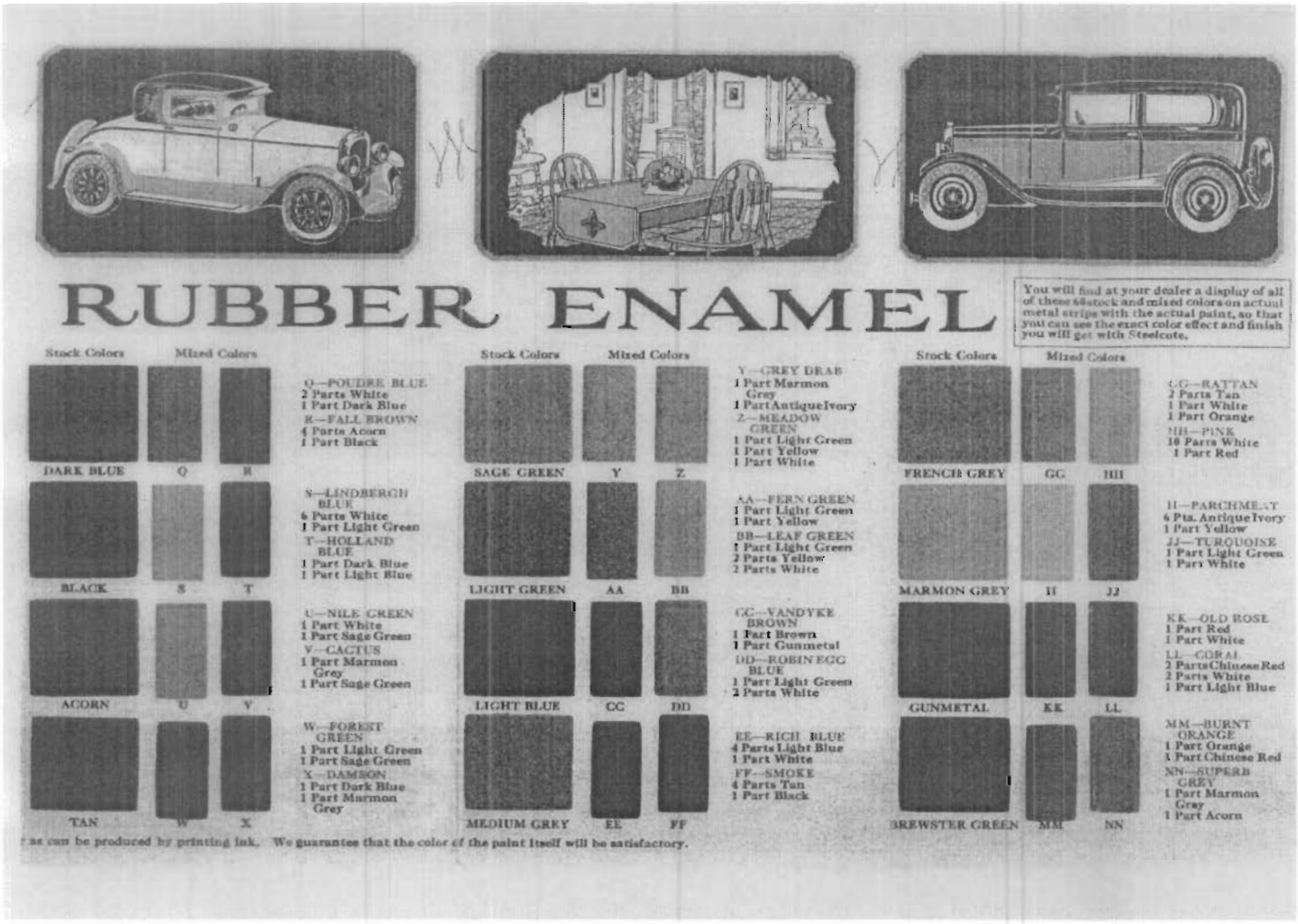
Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Doug Neidt Family Archives

Site Plan Advertisement of Property, ca. 1964

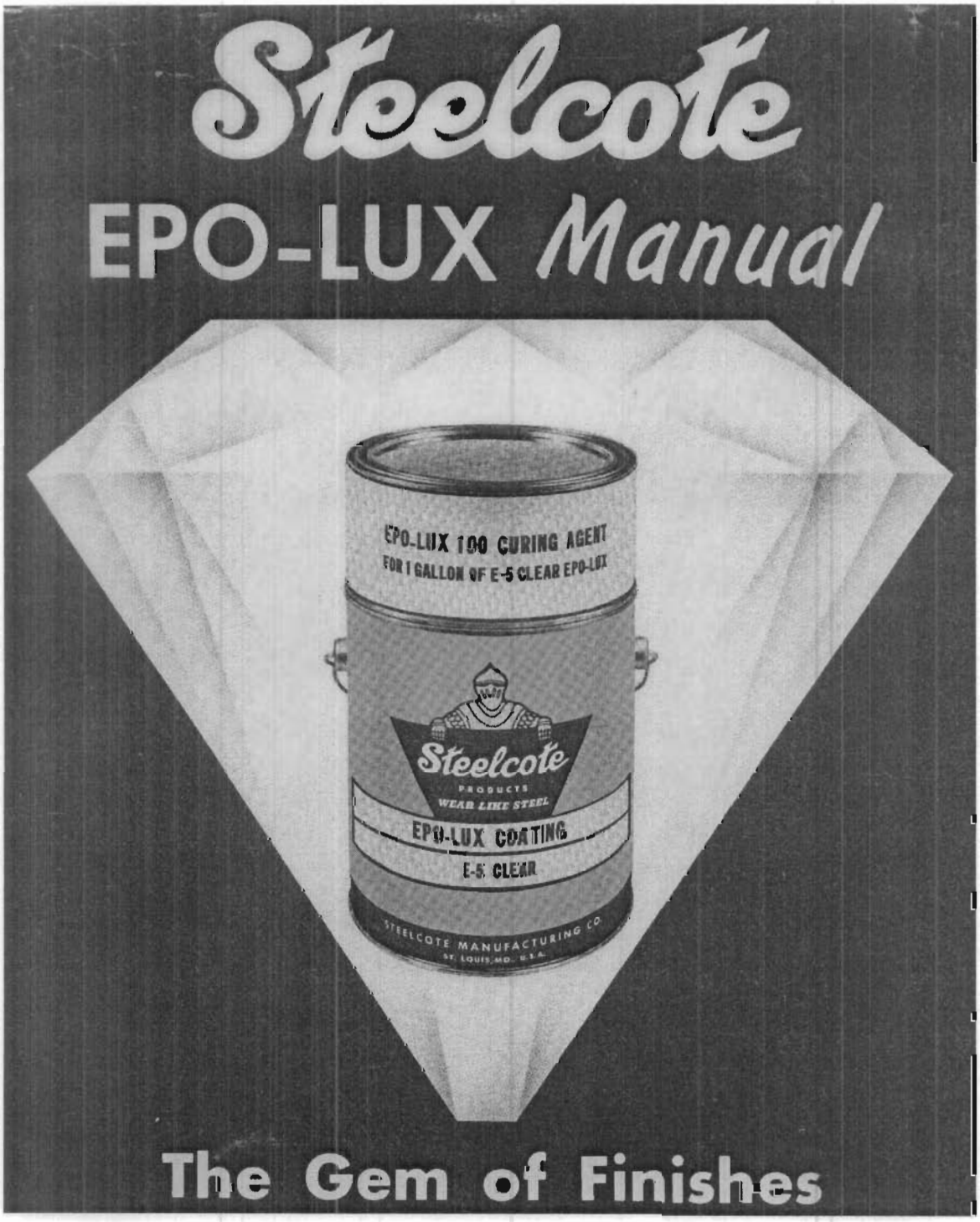
Doug Neidt Family Archives

Rubber Enamel Color Card, n.d.



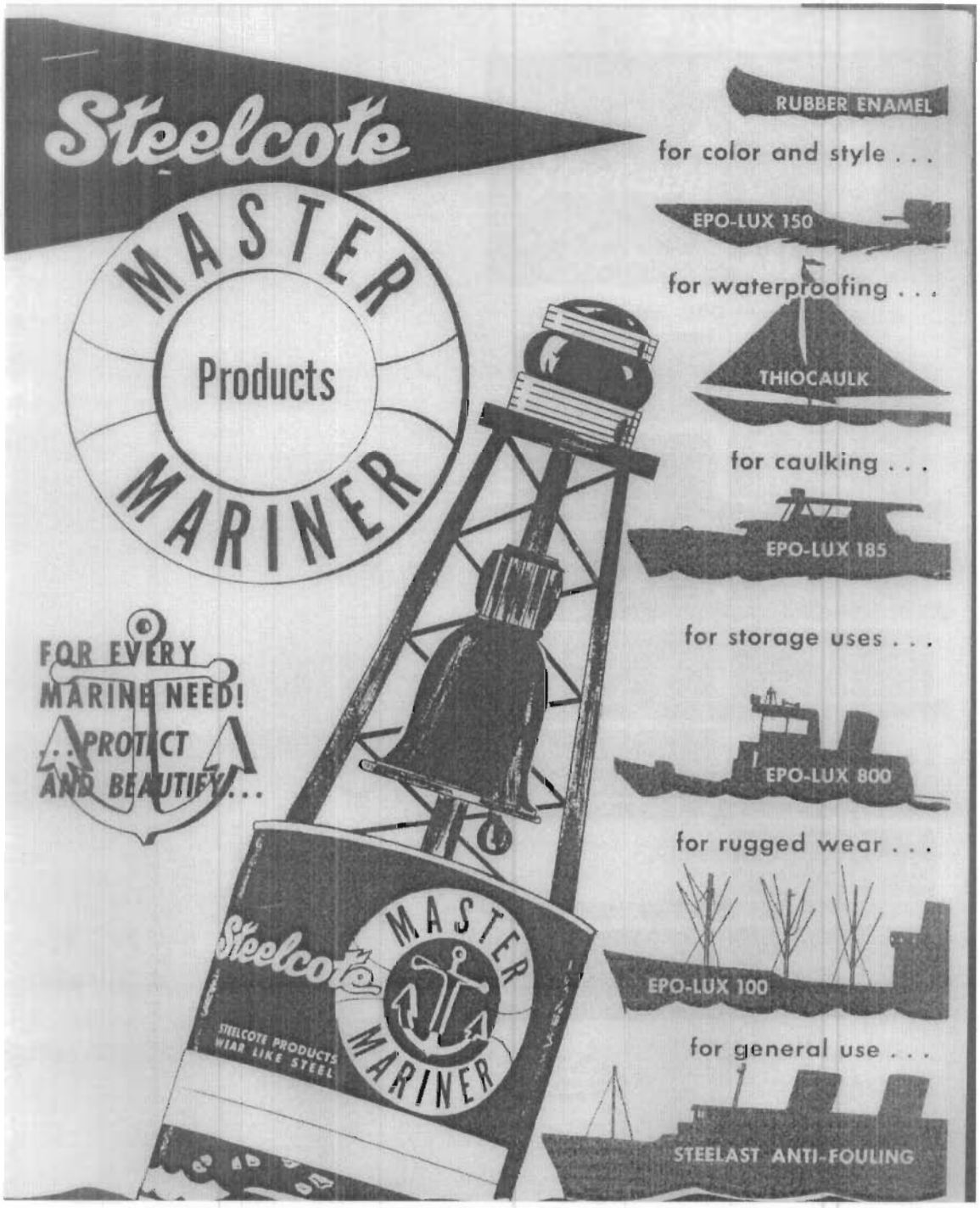
Doug Neidt Family Archives

Catalog Cover, n.d.



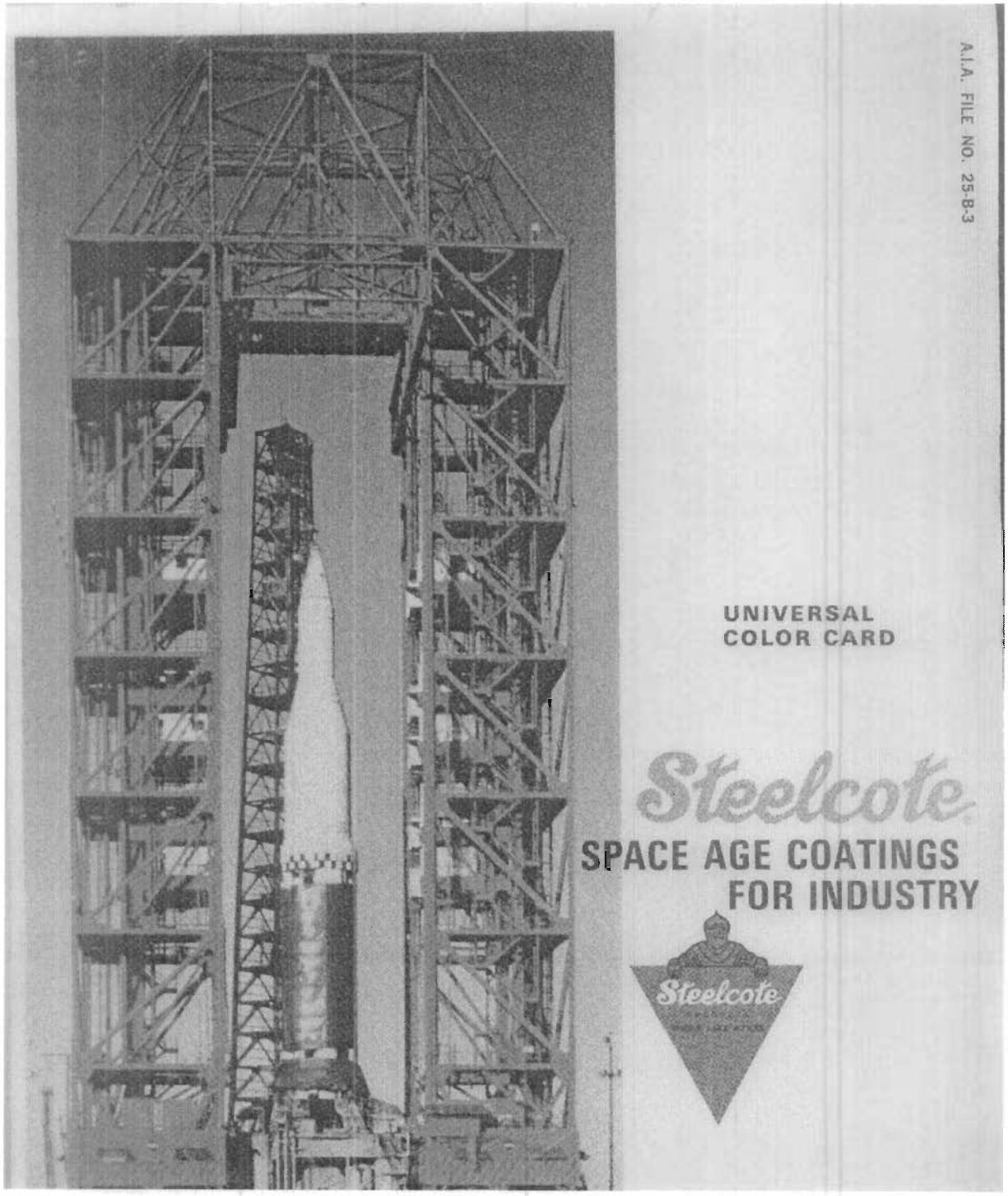
Doug Neidt Family Archives

Master Mariner Products, n.d.



Doug Neidt Family Archives

Color Card Cover, n.d.



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Verbal Boundary Description

Adjusted Tract 9 of the Consultant Lubricants Subdivision and in Block 2214 of the City of St. Louis according to the plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 63, Page 1 of the City of St. Louis Records and as outlined on the accompanying survey included with this nomination.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that was been historically associated with the original factory and the current property's legal description.

Photo Log

Photographer: Sheila Findall
May 2005
Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

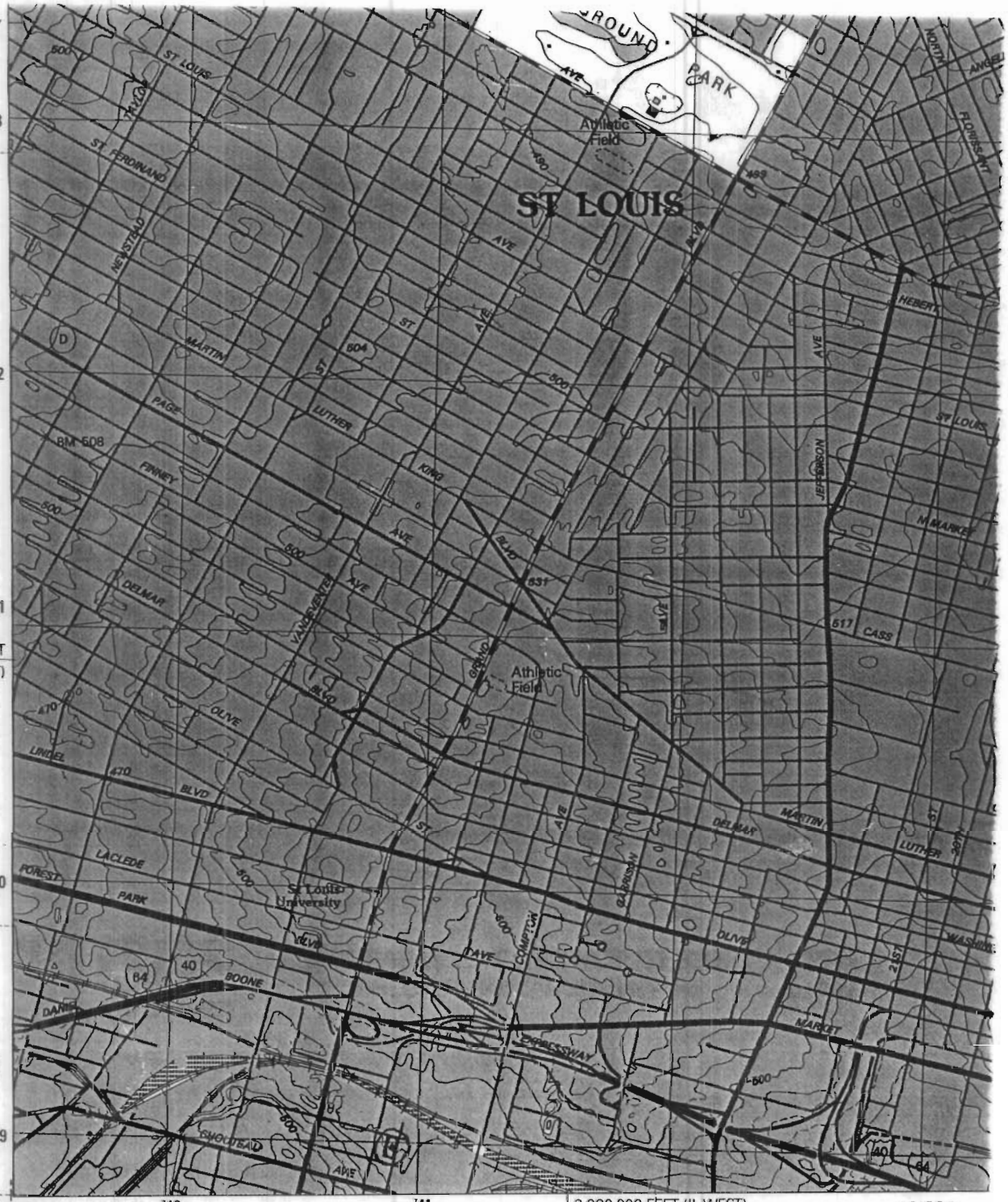
Photo #1: Exterior, looking northwest at main entry on southeast corner of factory
Photo #2: Exterior, southeast corner of factory complex looking northwest
Photo #3: Exterior, northeast corner of factory complex looking southwest
Photo #4: Exterior, northwest corner of factory complex looking southeast at varnish plant
Photo #5: Exterior, northwest corner of factory complex looking southeast
Photo #6: Exterior, looking east inside courtyard at tank house and north elevation of factory

Photographer: Timothy P. Maloney
May 2005
Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #7: Interior, first floor from stairwell looking toward northwest corner
Photo #8: Interior, first floor from west end looking east
Photo #9: Interior, first floor, looking south into freight elevator flanked by stairwells

Photographer: Sheila Findall
May 2005
Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #10: Interior, first floor from mid-building looking southeast
Photo #11: Interior, second floor, inside laboratory in southeast corner, looking northwest
Photo #12: Interior, third floor, looking northwest from stairwell
Photo #13: Interior, fourth floor, from northwest looking southeast
Photo #14: Interior, fifth floor, from east end looking west
Photo #15: Interior, second floor, front stairwell looking southwest at stairs and laboratory door
Photo #16: Interior, first floor, looking southwest at rear stairs
Photo #17: Interior, fourth floor, looking northeast at detail of paint mixing equipment



Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

UTM Reference
15/740790/4278986

Produced by the United States Geological Survey

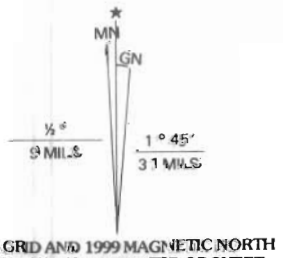
Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1998; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1954. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15
10 000-foot ticks: Illinois (west zone) and Missouri (east zone)
Coordinate Systems of 1983

North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software

Contours that conflict with revised planimetry are dashed

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



UTM GRID AND 1999 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

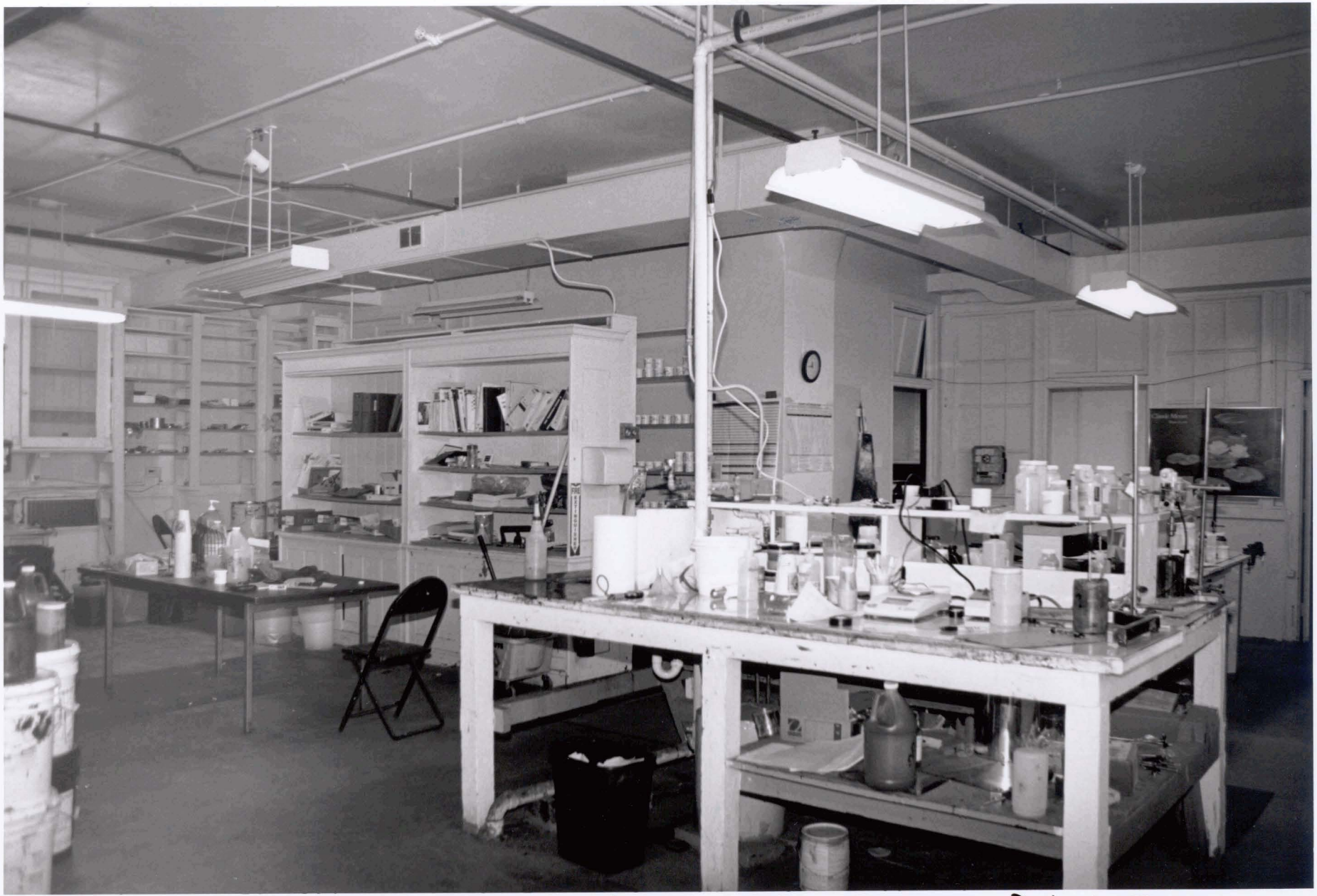
1:24000

20% TOTAL RECOVERED FIBER

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 9

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo #1

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City). MO
Photo # 10



Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 11

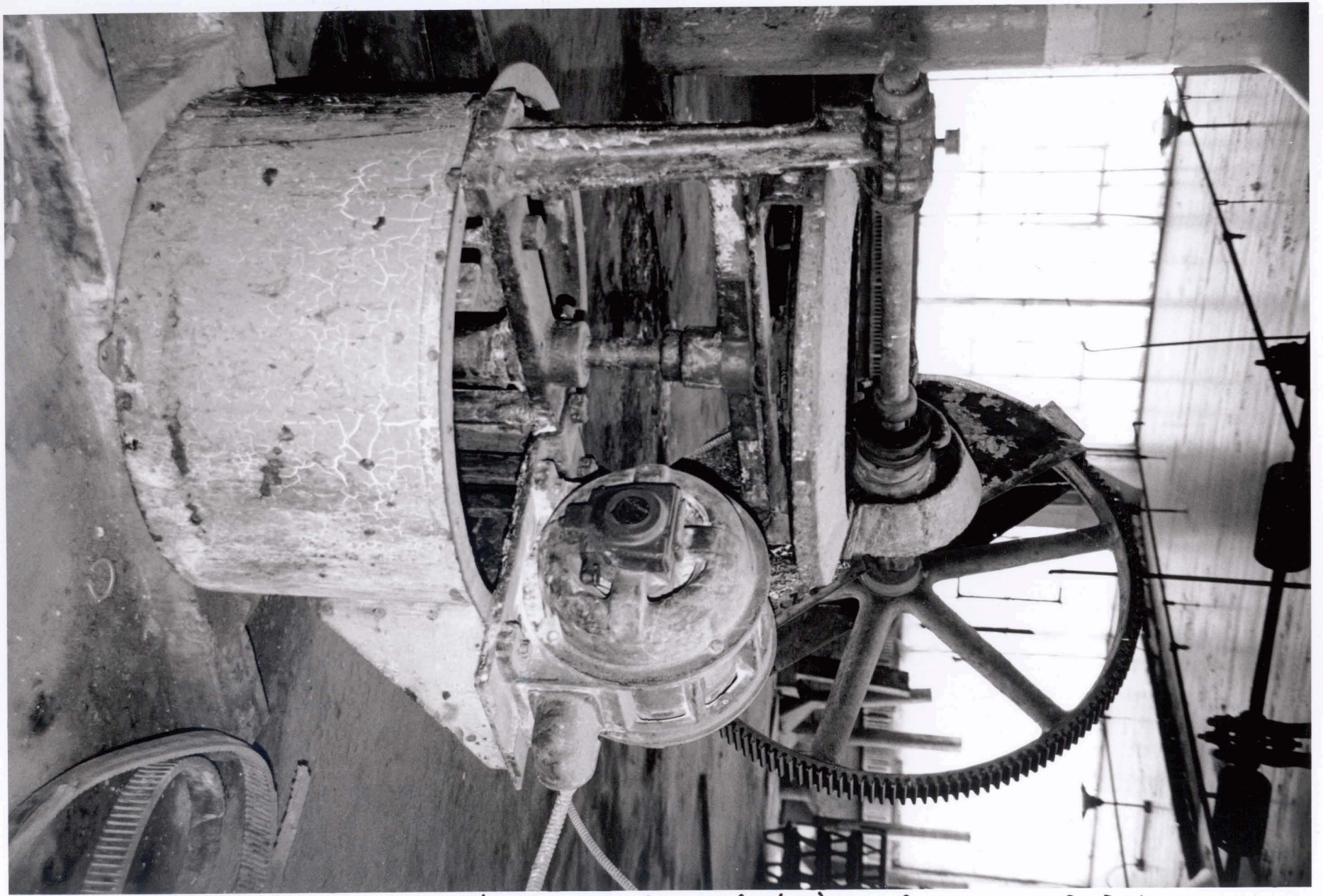
Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 12

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), Mo
Photo # 13

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 14

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo #15

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 16



Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City) MO
Photo # 17

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo #2

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 3

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 4

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 5

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 6

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 7

Steelcote Manufacturing Company Paint Factory
St. Louis (Independent City), MO
Photo # 8