

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: N/A

other name/site number: West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District (preferred)

2. Location

street & number: 12 - 16 North Main Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Liberty

vicinity: N/A

state: MO

county: Clay

code: 047

zip code: 64068

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>3</u>     | _____           | buildings  |
| _____        | _____           | sites      |
| _____        | _____           | structures |
| _____        | _____           | objects    |
| <u>3</u>     | <u>0</u>        | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri"

=====  
4. 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria.      See continuation sheet.



9 November 1992  
Date

Signature of certifying official  
Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO  
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.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
5. National Park Service Certification  
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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 \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

|           |                                 |      |                                |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| Historic: | <u>Commerce/Trade</u>           | Sub: | <u>Specialty Store</u>         |
|           | <u>Commerce/Trade</u>           |      | <u>Department Store</u>        |
|           | <u>Health Care</u>              |      | <u>Medical Business/Office</u> |
| Current : | <u>Commerce/Trade</u>           | Sub: | <u>Specialty Store</u>         |
|           | <u>Recreation &amp; Culture</u> |      | <u>Museum</u>                  |

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification:

Victorian Italianate

Other: Two-Part Commercial Block

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Limestone roof Asphalt  
walls Brick other Metal  
Stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: Commerce  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1877 - 1942

Significant Dates : 1877 1885

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 1  
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**SUMMARY:** The West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District is located in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. It consists of three contributing buildings, located west of the Clay County Courthouse on North Main Street, between East Franklin and East Kansas streets. The three, two-story brick Victorian Two-Part Commercial Block buildings (see Multiple Property Submission "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri") are in the middle of a block of ten two- and three-story commercial buildings.

**ELABORATION:** The West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District contains three buildings which are clearly associated with the historic context "The Courthouse Square in Liberty: Commercial and Governmental Center of Clay County, 1858-1942": 12 N. Main, 14 N. Main, and 16 N. Main. All three buildings fulfill the registration requirements for the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings, as outlined in section F, "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri" Multiple Property Documentation Form. In addition to retaining their integrity in the important areas of location and setting, all reflect historic association and feeling as well. In addition, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are found in a high degree. This district thus conveys a historic sense of commerce on Liberty's courthouse square before the turn of the century.

The three adjoining buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District are all located on North Main Street, a one-way street on the west side of the Clay County Courthouse which is higher in elevation at its north end. All vehicular traffic around the square is one way, traveling in a counter-clockwise manner. The sidewalks are of large, concrete block pavers. Angled parking along the street is demarcated by interlocking brick pavers in a herringbone pattern, with the parking spaces defined by a soldier course of lighter colored bricks. Crosswalks are laid in the same brick pattern. There are three modern street lights on the west side of North Main, whose design is representative of historical light standards.

All of the commercial buildings on this block of North Main, between East Franklin and East Kansas streets, were constructed in the late nineteenth century, but some have suffered a loss of integrity in varying degrees. The boundaries for the district, therefore, have been arranged so as to include only those properties which exhibit the greatest amount of integrity. Immediately to the north, for example, is a commercial building

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 2  
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which has been covered with asbestos siding, and to the south is one which has been covered with stucco.

The three buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District were constructed between 1877 and 1885, and contain numerous features common to the Italianate style of commercial architecture. All three buildings are of identical height, and have a projecting and heavily emphasized roof line, which contains the majority of architectural detailing on the buildings. Other design features common to all three buildings are arched window openings on the second story, a clearly defined "cornice" between the first and second story, and a distinct storefront area. In particular, the second stories of these buildings are among the most elaborate of the extant historic Two-Part Commercial Blocks on the square.

As with all of the Two-Part Commercial Blocks which face the Clay County Courthouse, the three buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District abut the sidewalk, and fill the entire property line. The front facades are thus on the same plane as all of the buildings on this block of North Main Street. However, the rooflines of the three buildings are approximately ten feet higher than the adjoining building to the south, due in part to the slight rise in elevation of North Main Street. The remaining buildings on the block to the north are the same height as those in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District.

The three buildings, as mentioned earlier, have highly elaborate second stories, as evidenced by the deeply projecting cornices with brackets, dentils, and other decorative details. All of the windows are wood frame, one-over-one, double-hung sash, and are set within deeply recessed arched openings. The window lintels are arched brick voissiors, with keystone. Although all of the windows are tall and narrow, each individual building contains windows of varying sizes. Engaged brick pilasters enframe the second story of two of the buildings.

The facades of the buildings in the district are clearly defined into two zones, with the first story storefronts separated from the elaborated upper story by a decorative cornice. All of the storefronts have enframing pilasters topped with brackets at the first-story cornice line. In addition, two of the first-story cornices have dentil details, and the third contains the building's sign. All three buildings have recessed entry doors, and large display windows with bulkheads below.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 3  
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A historic photograph from 1922 reveals that one building, 14 N. Main, is virtually unchanged from that period. It is probable that the only alteration to this building was the use of prism glass tiles in the transom area. The other two buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District are also unchanged from this period on the second story. The original storefronts, however, were of cast iron with display windows and large fixed transom windows above. The storefronts of 12 N. Main and 16 N. Main have since been altered. The current storefront of 12 N. Main is a recent replacement of an earlier, less sympathetic alteration. In sum, then, the upper stories of the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District have the same appearance today as they did in the period when the district achieved its significance. The first stories (in one case, still historic) utilize a similar scale and basic storefront arrangement, which does not detract from a historic sense of time and place.

A full listing of the resources in the West Liberty Courthouse Historic District follows, giving the address, property type, estimated date of construction, and contributing versus non-contributing status. A brief description of each resource follows the listing.

12 N. Main. Two-Part Commercial Block (1885) Contributing.

This Italianate Two-Part Commercial Block building is two-stories high and constructed of brick. The first story storefront is not historic, but contains features which reflect the scale and spirit of a historic storefront. The entire storefront is recessed behind the plane of the building's facade, between two brick enframing pilasters. With the recessed storefront is a single entry door on the north, and two large fixed display windows. A panelled wood bulkhead is below, and large fixed pane transom windows are above. Flush with the surface of the facade, in the transom area of the storefront, are arched decorative iron designs above a steel beam, which contains the building's business sign. Above is a projecting decorative cornice with corner brackets and dentils, which together with those of the two adjacent buildings on the north, form an unbroken line separating the floors. The second story features a center, paired set of windows set within an arched, corbelled brick opening. It is flanked by two narrower round top windows. Each window opening features a decorative keystone. Above the windows are corbelled bricks forming bracket patterns, and topped with an elaborate projecting cornice. Flanked by scrolled, paired brackets, the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 4  
=====

cornice features brackets separating paired, circular medallions on the frieze, and incised patterns on the cornice.

14 N. Main. Two-Part Commercial Block. (1877) Contributing.

This Italianate Two-Part Commercial Block building is constructed of brick and is two-stories high. It features a nearly intact historic storefront enframed with panelled wood pilasters, tipped with block brackets at the first story cornice line. The centered, recessed entry has double wood panelled and glass doors, flanked by large display windows with plain bulkheads below. The transom area has 4 x 4 inch prism glass tiles in leaded panels, two of which are louvered for ventilation. A building sign is in the first story cornice area, which separates the two stories with a projecting stringcourse. The second story is highly textured, having four double-recessed arched windows. Two narrow windows are in the center, and are flanked by slightly wider windows which have keystones in the arches. Separating the window groupings are engaged brick pilasters with stone capitals and bases. All are one-over-one, wood frame, double-hung sash. Two horizontal linear bands of stone tie the windows together, following the curvature of the window heads and separating them from the cornice. The widely overhanging cornice contains brackets, and peaks in the center with a broken pediment parapet containing the date "1877". A 1922 photograph shows an apothecary urn on top of the parapet.

16 N. Main. Two-Part Commercial Block (1885) Contributing.

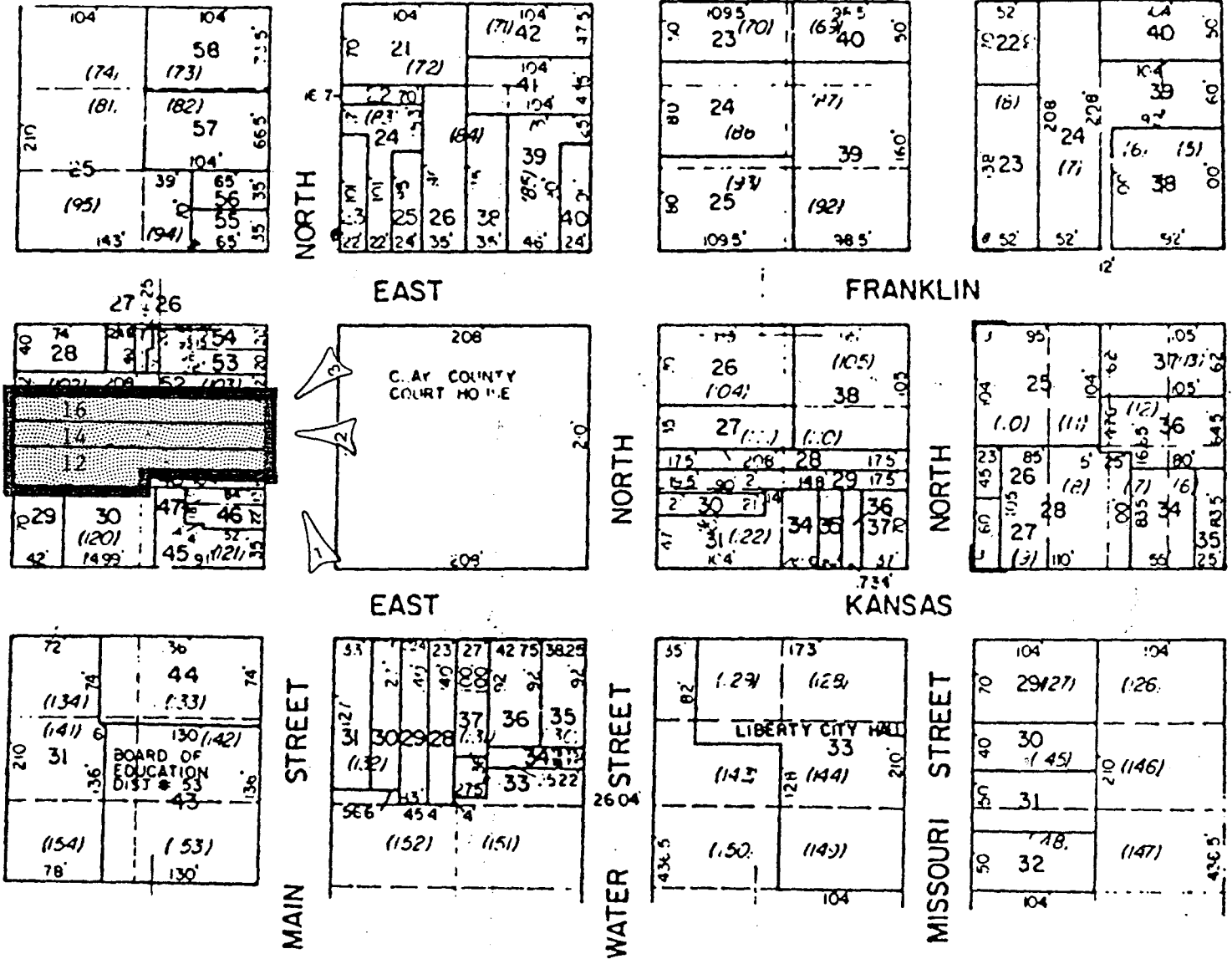
This brick Italianate Two-Part Commercial Block was built in 1885, and retains its historic second story features. There are four narrow wood frame, one-over-one, double-hung sash windows on the upper story, set within double recessed arched openings with keystone accents. The center two windows are narrower than those flanking. Above is a widely overhanging cornice, with brackets dividing a panelled frieze with diamond-shaped decorations and dentils. Dentils are also located on the projecting cornice separating the first from the second story. A non-historic storefront of brick veneer contains a few references to historic design. Brick pilasters enframe the first floor, which has a slightly off-center recessed entry. Large display windows flank the entry, and the bulkhead and transom area are brick veneer.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET


Section number 7 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 5





West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District  
Liberty, Clay County, Missouri  
Scale: Unknown




LEGEND:

Contributing resources 

Non-contributing resources 

District boundary 

Camera position 

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 1  
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**SUMMARY:**

The West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District in Liberty, Missouri is significant under criteria A and C in the areas of COMMERCE and ARCHITECTURE. Under criterion A, the district retains its historic associations with commerce around the central courthouse square in Liberty. The entire west side of square contains the oldest block of extant commercial buildings in Liberty, and the buildings in the historic district are representative of the range of commercial enterprises before the turn of the century. The West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District represents those buildings on the block which possess the greatest historic character, reflective of day-to-day business life in a small, Midwestern county seat. The relevant historic context, as defined in the Multiple Property Submission "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri," (hereafter, "Liberty-MPS") is "The Courthouse Square in Liberty: Commercial and Governmental Center of Clay County, 1858-1942". In addition, the buildings in the historic district are not only excellent representatives of the Two-Part Commercial Block property type, as defined in the aforementioned multiple property submission, but are intact and elaborate examples of the Italianate commercial style.

**ELABORATION:**

Although only three buildings are included in this district nomination, the history of the entire block of the west side of the square is indicative of the importance of the central courthouse square to commerce in Liberty. As noted in the "Liberty-MPS", the lots surrounding the public square were the first to sell, and the first to contain combination residential and commercial buildings. The original plat for the town laid out 210 foot square blocks. Facing the courthouse square, each block had three seventy foot wide blocks (Ohman, 1985). After the early shop-houses gave way to strictly commercial buildings, though, these generous lots were subdivided and soon contained two to three buildings each.

The blocks on N. Main, between East Franklin and East Kansas streets, and on E. Kansas, between Main and Water streets, seemed to be particularly desirable. The 1883 Sanborn Map reveals no available vacant lots on the west and south sides of the square, whereas a few still existed on the other two sides (Sanborn Map, 1883). By 1883, in fact, five of the ten currently extant buildings had been constructed; in 1885, two more were built; in 1888, an additional two; and by 1890, the last and northernmost commercial building on the block had been constructed (Inventory

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 2  
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sheets). All of these had replaced earlier buildings on the same site - additional proof of the desirability of conducting commerce on the square.

Examination of the Sanborn Maps also reveals stable business types over the years on the west side of the square. The three buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District, in particular, housed the same types of businesses for anywhere from fifty up to eighty-seven years. 14 N. Main was constructed in 1877 as a drug store by Daniel Hughes, and remained as such until 1964, when the Clay County Museum Association purchased the building for museum purposes (Clay County Museum Association Newsletter, October 1964). Daniel Hughes in 1877 was already a registered pharmacist and druggist in town. He had entered a partnership in 1870 with S.W. Warren, and bought out his partner two years later (History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885). In 1888, J.C. Simmons purchased half interest in the drug store after having previously traveled for several years for a wholesale drug company (Liberty Tribune, 6 February 1936). The pharmacy remained in Simmons' name at least through the 1940's. Clarence Ferril operated a drug store in the building in the 1950's until 1964, when the building was purchased for a museum. Operating out of offices on the second floor for several decades in the twentieth century was Dr. W. H. Goodson.

12 N. Main Street was built in 1885 by Philip Fraher, to replace an earlier one-story building on the same site. Philip Fraher was born in Ireland, and came to Liberty in 1851 to form a partnership with his brother, James, in manufacturing and selling boots and shoes. The partnership dissolved in 1874, and both brothers continued dealing in boots and shoes (History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885). Both businesses eventually located on the same side of the square, the N. Main Street block. Philip Fraher & Son's shoe store was at 12 N. Main, and was known as the "Middle Frahers". James Fraher & Sons' store was at the north end of the west block, 22 N. Main, and was known as "Corner Frahers" (Liberty Tribune, 6 February 1936). 12 N. Main, the "Middle Frahers", remained as a shoe store for several years after the death of Philip Fraher in 1888, with the business being carried on by his son, Thomas J. (Liberty Tribune, 3 December 1915). Historic photographs and Sanborn Maps reveal that James Fraher & Sons's shoe store ceased operation around the turn of the century, but that P. Fraher & Son's shoe store was operating at least until 1922 (Withers, 1922; Sanborn Maps, 1899 & 1906). From the 1930's through the 1950's, the building provided offices

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 3  
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for Missouri Gas & Electric Company. The west side of the square, however, continued to remain a focal area for shoes in Liberty, as cobblers, repair shops, and shoe dealers have operated in other buildings along N. Main.

16 N. Main also served as a shoe store between 1899 and 1929, when it housed the Jack Petty Shoe Store (Sanborn Map, 1899; Liberty, Missouri Telephone Directory, January 1929). It was originally constructed as a dry goods store in 1885, operated by Jack L. Petty, Sr., and Benjamin F. Corbin (Historic Inventory Sheet). It too, replaced an earlier dry goods store on the same site. In later years, the shoe store was operated by Jack Petty, Jr. (Liberty Tribune, 6 February 1936). In the 1950's, it housed Hunt Radio and Electric Co., dealers in electrical appliances (Liberty, Missouri Telephone Directory, March 1954).

The buildings in the West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District are thus closely associated with the commerce of Liberty, particularly around the square's period of greatest economic growth - the 1870's and 1880's - as reflected in new construction (see "Liberty-MPS"). In addition, the three buildings indicate the continued strength of commerce on the square over the years. Most of the buildings were constructed to replace earlier ones on the same site. The buildings in the historic district, in particular, contained stable enterprises which operated for decades at the same location.

The historic character of the West Liberty Courthouse Historic District comes from its retention of a high degree of architectural integrity and historic associations. While other buildings on the west side of the square along N. Main Street were constructed during the historic period, several have suffered varying losses in their integrity. The three buildings included in the district, however, possess an architectural coherence as well as their historic integrity. Each building contains decorative features typical of the Italianate commercial style. While the buildings share many similar design elements, each remains distinctly individual due to these elements. This district today, in fact, is the most elaborate collection of extant Victorian commercial buildings in Liberty, which again reflects a well defined period of architectural development around the square. In addition, the district's buildings all fulfill the requirements for the Two-Part Commercial Block property type, as defined in the "Liberty-MPS". Their well-defined storefronts, distinct from the elaborate upper stories, add to the overall cohesiveness of the central courthouse square.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District

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Page 4

[In the course of research for this nomination, no generally accepted historic name was discovered for this district. However, the Liberty square, or the courthouse square, was, historically, a recognized and acknowledged feature, and it remains a point of reference for planning, civic, social, and commercial activity. The square was also used as the basis for the development of the first historic context under the Multiple Property Submission. Therefore, it was decided that the square, with the addition of appropriate geographical qualification, would be the basis of naming two proposed districts.]

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 West Liberty Square Historic District Page 1  
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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National Historical Company, 1885.

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Liberty Tribune. 3 December 1915, 6 February 1936.

Ohman, Marian M. Twenty Towns: Their Histories, Town Plans, and  
Architecture. Columbia, MO.: University of Missouri-Columbia  
Extension Division, 1985.

Sanborn Map for Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. New York: Sanborn  
Map Company, 1883, 1899.

Wolfenbarger, Deon. "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County,  
Missouri."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 1

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

Beginning at the southwest corner of Lot 113, Original Town of Liberty, proceed north 78 feet; then proceed east 208 feet, along the property line of 16 N. Main; then proceed south 62.8 feet; then proceed west 82 feet; then proceed south 3 feet; then proceed west 22 feet; then proceed south 12.2 feet; then proceed west 102 feet to the point of beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

District boundaries encompass the highest concentration of significant commercial structures on the west side of Liberty's courthouse square. Buildings on the north and south break the visual continuity of the district, containing alterations of a later period and a different character than the contributing buildings within the district. The boundaries are based on the current legally recorded lot lines for the associated resources.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Photos West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District Page 1  
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The following information is the same for all photographs listed below:

LOCATION OF SITE: West Liberty Courthouse Square Historic District, Liberty, MO  
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Bob Askren  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 19 December 1991  
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO

List of Photographs

1. Perspective shot of west side of Liberty's Courthouse Square, taken from southeast. Subject properties are in the middle of the block, 12 - 16 North Main Street.
2. East elevation of three subject properties at 12 - 16 North Main Street.
3. Closeup view of cornice line, 12 - 16 North Main Street.





1062 / SE  
(NASHUA)

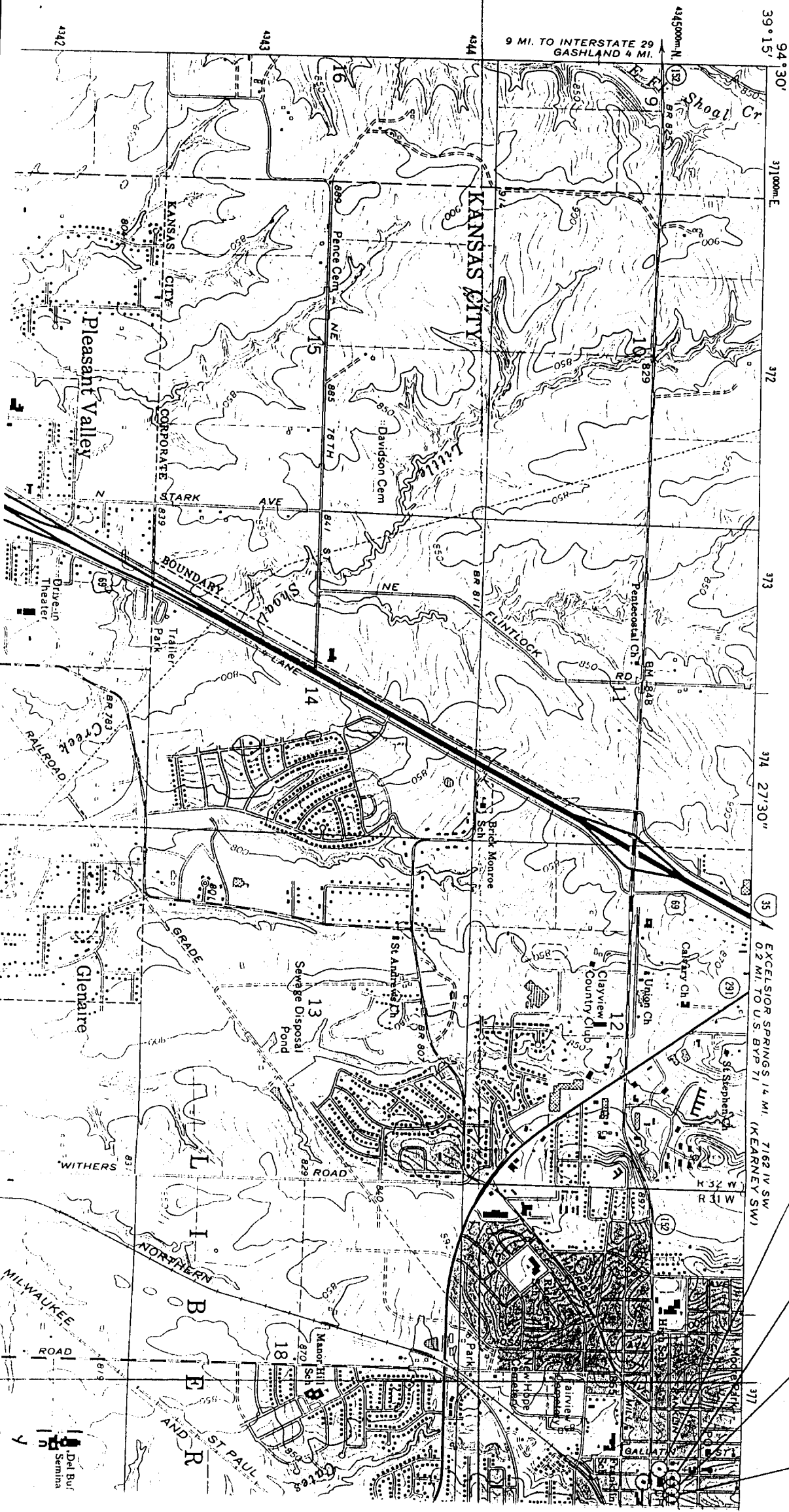
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

12-16 N MAIN ST. LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
UTM 15/877420/4344885

WILLER BUILDING 2 E. CLAY COUNTY MISSOURI  
UTM 15/877470/4344950

100 E LIBERTY ST. CLAY COUNTY MISSOURI  
UTM 15/877510/4344950

CLAY  
104  
22



9 MI. TO INTERSTATE 29  
GASLAND 4 MI.

39° 15' N  
94° 30' W

371000m E

372

373

374 27'30"

35

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 1.4 MI. (K 762 IV SW)  
0.2 MI. TO U.S. BVP 71

377

4342

4343

4344

4345000m N

BR 822

BR 821

BR 820

BR 823

BR 824

BR 825

BR 826

BR 827

BR 828

BR 829

BR 830

BR 831

BR 832

BR 833

BR 834

BR 835

BR 836

BR 837

BR 838

BR 839

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BR 841

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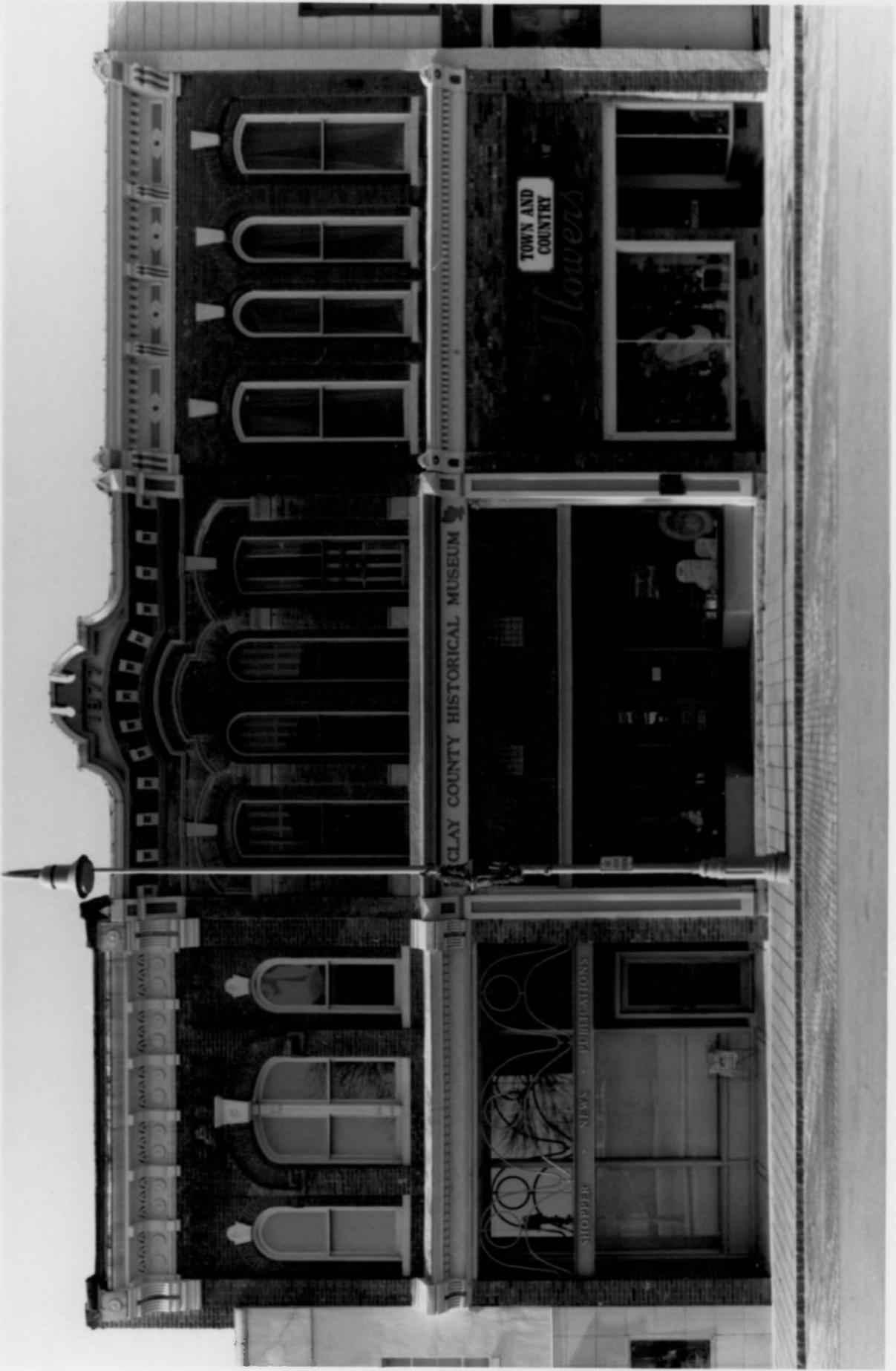
BR 859

BR 860

Del Buf  
Semina









TOWN AND COUNTRY

Flowers

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM