

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 by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functional 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 John Weisert Tobacco Company Building

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 1120 South Sixth Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Saint Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63104

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Mark A. Miles

04/29/04

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

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 _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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): _____

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/ manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation LESTONE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE

TERRA COTTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1903-1954

Significant Dates

1903

1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rieve, Anton

Lantz, Edward

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

SUMMARY

Located in an industrial and commercial area directly south of downtown St. Louis and north of the Soulard neighborhood on the mid-block north of Hickory spanning between South Sixth Street and French Market Court, the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building at 1120 South Sixth Street is a prominent, five story, red-brown brick, factory building. It was completed in two sections, combining to form a rectangular factory complex, internally connected as one building that is 138 x 90 feet. Its simple, early twentieth century factory design is utilitarian with the original building completed in 1903 in brick pier and spandrel construction, while the 1922 addition reflects structural innovations and new materials, both steel and concrete, which resulted in a fireproof skeletal frame of reinforced concrete. The basic exterior of the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is largely intact, except for some replacement overhead doors and the 1990s reconstruction of the south addition's parapet. The windows were boarded up (at least partially intact underneath) for security reasons in the 1980s, obscuring the fenestration details, but as part of the historic rehabilitation project they are being uncovered and both the damaged wood sashed windows and industrial steel windows are being replicated. Even the poorly repointed parapet is being repointed, and while it still lost some of its original terra cotta coping tiles, it will more closely approximate its historic appearance. The interior has never been altered significantly, retaining its distinctive factory appearance with: the large expanses of open factory floors, the exposed structural members, freight elevator, wooden and steel stairways, as well as remnants of the original tobacco drying racks. The building maintains much of its original association with its turn-of-the-century factory design and the interior continues to provide direct association, feeling, and even smell of an early tobacco factory. In addition, the masonry work and interior features provide significant insight into the workmanship, materials, and design of factories in the early twentieth century. The John Weisert Tobacco Company Building today, despite the minor exterior modifications, retains its historic integrity and is still a very significant and prominent reminder of the early industrial development in St. Louis, especially the tobacco industry that was one of its most significant components.

EXTERIOR

This five story, red-brown brick factory was built in two parts mid-block, facing west onto South Sixth Street and extending to French Market Court on the east (a street that is little more than a named alley). To its south is a large empty lot, that previously had additional factory buildings for other businesses, but they have long been demolished. On the north is a more modern brick warehouse building. Sixth Street parallels the Mississippi River leading south from downtown merging into Broadway at the northern end of the Soulard Neighborhood Historic District (listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 26, 1972) near the historic Soulard Farmers' Market, with the massive Anheuser-Busch headquarters and brewery at the southern end of this historic neighborhood. This industrial area, including the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building, is isolated from the central business district, downtown St. Louis, by controlled access highways (U.S. 64, 55, and 70) which converge just north and east of the factory along with the old railroad bridge across the Mississippi River. Across Sixth Street, to the west, is another historic property, Madison School (which just finished a major historic rehabilitation project and is still in use as a public elementary school) and opposite the school on Seventh Street is the historic Moloney Electric Company Building (listed in the National Register March 28, 2002). The factory building is just three blocks north of the historic Soulard neighborhood (a National Register historic district), one of the oldest, extant neighborhoods in St. Louis (dating from the mid-nineteenth century), traditionally a mixed use area, combining residential, commercial, and even early industrial operations. The building is located in an industrial area that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century south of the downtown and near the Mississippi riverfront (an area now called Chouteau's Landing), primarily east of Broadway, which is one block to the east. Today, the remaining historic industrial complexes in Chouteau's Landing are scattered among newer and larger, industrial and corporate complexes, such as Ralston-Purina (two blocks west of the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building), Nooter Corporation (to the east), and Anheuser-Busch (at the south end of the industrial area and near the south end of Soulard).

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

It was included in the 1989-1990 historic industrial survey (see the Landmarks Association bibliographic citations), as one example of an extant factory complex that combined both pier and spandrel construction and a reinforced concrete frame. The first section, finished in 1903, extends 75 feet along South Sixth and 90 feet back to French Market Court with the 1922 addition to the south being the same depth but only 63 feet wide on the facade. Of the four factory subtypes that Landmarks Association identified in their historic industrial surveys for the areas east of Broadway, the original 1903 John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is typical of the brick-pier and spandrel construction of the Factory Subtype B. The massive brick piers allowed for thinner spandrels and larger windows, improving interior lighting. The 1922 addition is typical of another subtype identified in the Landmarks Association industrial survey, Factory Subtype C, which is noted for its fireproof skeletal frame of reinforced concrete. Both the facade and south wall have brick curtain walls over the concrete framing, but the rear elevation reveals the exposed concrete framing. As is characteristic of this subtype, the innovations offered in steel concrete framing allowed for maximum lighting and large steel industrial windows rather than the earlier use of series of wood sashed windows. It originally had a terra cotta parapet cap, which is only partially intact today (the original is evident in the historic inventory form photo completed in 1988). This is a simple brick, vernacular design, not highly stylized, with a limestone foundation at the base of the building and its addition, as well as a corbelled brick cornice on the original building. The fenestration pattern help organize the exterior into distinct horizontal divisions on the facade. While remaining basically functional, the vertical brick detailing in the piers of the addition creates a pilaster-like detailing that accentuates the vertical divisions of the warehouse addition.

Original Factory

The facade of the five story, rectangular, original factory building is divided into four primary bays with three sub-bays in each section. Masonry support walls of red-brown brick, a corbelled brick parapet with a projecting dressed limestone cap, and the ashlar limestone foundation complete the post and beam construction of the original factory. Each bay is defined by the clusters of three, triple rowlock, brick, segmental arched window openings with the original six-over-six wooden sashed windows on the upper levels (boarded over), each with a separate dressed limestone sill. Separating the upper levels from the street level, the second floor limestone sills combine with rows of projecting brick to form a belt course. This separation is further accentuated by the combination of the rowlock course and projecting brick course at curves over the triple rowlock brick segmental arched lintels of the first floor to form another belt course on top of the first floor openings. Between these two belt courses is the remnant of the original sign, painted on the brick, "JOHN WEISERT TOBACCO CO." The first floor openings are generally aligned with those on the upper levels and clustered into four primary bays, but are not symmetrically positioned. In the north bay is the office door entry, a half light, wood paneled door with transom deeply recessed in its brick, segmental arched opening and flanked by segmental arched, one-over-one wood sashed windows with limestone sills. At the north end of the next bay to the south is another, matching wood sashed window and at the south end of this bay is a smaller version of the segmental arched wood sashed window. The next bay to the south has three six-over-six wood sashed windows with segmental arched brick lintels similar to those on the upper levels. The south bay has a rectangular freight door with a wooden multipaned transom, although the original door has been replaced. A spiral steel fire escape extended the height of the building on the south end of the original factory facade when the photographs were taken, but it was dangerously rusted and its removal was approved as part of the current historic rehabilitation project.

The north elevation of the original building has six bays and still retains the original wooden six-over-six window frames, matching those on the facade, one within each bay on the upper levels. The first floor of this elevation is less symmetrically designed, with sashed windows in several bays but with its primary function as a connector to the one story flat roofed, raised loading dock (with a concrete base) that spans the middle sections of this elevation. Originally, this dock was about half the size it is now, but it was apparently expanded about the time that the south addition was added. It retains the original, wooden sliding freight door with its multipaned transom above the large door that forms two sections

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Narrative Description (continued)

with three vertical recessed panels each below a rectangular light (now boarded over). Another loading dock door was added when the dock was expanded, near the rear of the dock. The dock has a brick north wall that is now attached to the adjacent building to the north and the brick driveway remains up to the loading dock on the facade. Iron hinges on some of the side windows indicate that the building originally had exterior shutters. There are remnants of an advertisement still painted across the top floor windows.

The east elevation, while facing French Market Court, is really an alley elevation. It contains six bays of segmental arched sashed window openings that begin at the elevator shaft and extend to the chimney shaft on the south end of the building. North of the elevator shaft, in the stairwell, there are no windows on the east elevation. On the first floor there are four windows and another, sliding freight door. Because of the slope of the lot, the limestone foundation is visible for approximately four feet above the street/alley level.

No longer visible is the original south elevation, as it now connects externally and internally with the 1922 addition. Originally it had a series of sashed window openings similar to the north elevation, but these were infilled with brick or converted into door openings for the 1922 addition. There was originally a one story, concrete floor wing for the coal-fired boiler on the back half of the south elevation, but it was apparently removed with the 1922 addition.

On top of the roof, visible from the rear elevation, are the brick elevator shaft and chimney for the boiler. Attached to the elevator shaft is a small wood framed penthouse that appears to have been added with the modifications made in 1922. It was little more than sparse wood framing with window openings, that was covered in rolled roofing in recent years. It was accessed from an interior staircase on the fifth floor, not the corner staircase, and from the freight elevator.

1922 Warehouse Addition

Built in 1922, this reinforced concrete frame addition has a red-brown brick curtain wall on the facade that is divided into three bays of windows that sustain a visual connection with the original structure by sharing common sill lines. Soldier courses of brick form flat headed lintels and sills with multipaned, industrial steel, horizontal pivot hinged window units tripled into each opening. Though boarded over with corrugated metal panels for protection, the original window frames remained intact. A short brick parapet embellished with simple terra cotta coping tiles and detailing once complimented the flat roofs, but tuckpointing in the last ten years reduced the parapet height slightly and utilized a white, non-matching mortar, but only minimally impacts the overall integrity of the facade (and the current rehabilitation project is correcting the mortar color). The first floor contains a multipaned wooden entry door with a small multipaned steel window above and narrow, multipaned industrial steel windows on either side to align with the upper window opening of the north bay. The south bay on the first floor contains a matching industrial steel window while the middle bay is a loading dock entry, which now has an overhead steel door.

The south elevation once acted as a common wall with a no longer extant, three story, industrial building. There are no windows on this side, but visual indications suggest three possible loading dock areas or windows on the first floor that have been bricked in many years ago.

On the rear elevation, bands of reinforced concrete framing visually separate the wall into four bays with the south two bays being narrower. Within this concrete framing is red-brown brick on the sides and base of each large window opening. On the fifth floor, which is shorter than the other floors, these windows are combinations of three-over-three steel sashed windows, clustered into groups of three in the middle and north bays, but hung singly in the south two bays. These windows have reinforcing mesh laminated in the glass and simple brick sills. The window openings on the other floors are combinations of industrial steel windows similar to those on the facade, but like the facade, these windows have been boarded over with gray metal panels for protection and security but the original windows are largely intact, although deteriorated. The first floor has a wooden, hinged, overhead door in the middle bay that accesses the interior loading dock, but the south bay windows on the first floor have been converted to hold cooling units and a steel access door added at the south end to access the basement. The north bay has a small door and another industrial window.

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Narrative Description (continued) INTERIOR FEATURES

The interior of the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building retains most of its original, distinctive features that identify it as a compact, functional, historic factory building. Originally, the north building served as both tobacco factory and offices for the John Weisert Tobacco Company, with the offices located on the first floor (but since demolished). The processing of the tobacco began on the first floor with tobacco leaves sent up the freight elevator to the fifth floor for drying and steaming, where a portion of the original, wood framed drying rack is still intact. Steam and heat were generated on the floor below with vents through the floor into the drying rack and some of that ductwork is also intact. Stemming took place on the fourth floor and cleaning on the third. Workers on the second floor packed the products for shipping, which was handled on the first floor. The 1922 addition served as a warehouse for the tobacco factory as it expanded its operations. The original building and addition are connected at the original south wall of the 1903 factory with its massive, load-bearing brick wall. The original window openings were infilled with brick when the addition was completed, or were converted into doorways between the two sections.

The interior of the original factory building is unadorned with its exposed brick walls, massive wooden beams and posts supporting each level of exposed joists, and tongue and groove floorboards. In the northeast corner, enclosed by brick walls, is the wooden staircase that extends from the basement to the fifth floor and has metal clad, sliding fire doors at each floor. Adjacent on the south side of the stairwell is the freight elevator, which also has sliding, metal clad doors. In the middle of the fifth floor is a wooden, straight flight staircase to the rooftop penthouse.

The warehouse addition on the south utilizes more modern structural materials and systems with its poured concrete foundation and reinforced concrete framing that is expressed on the interior with the rows of round concrete columns with mushroom capitals and the poured concrete floors and ceiling plates. Like the original building, the addition has exposed brick walls and an open interior. Only on the first floor are there any partitions, with a large brick wall section around the boiler room on the north rear section. There is a concrete loading dock recessed into the poured concrete floor on the first floor that connects to the rear freight door. A simple steel, pipe railing, open, straight flight stairs zigzags up from the first floor to the fifth floor at the northwest corner. In recent years, a framed partition wall has been added to the southeast corner of the first floor.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

Despite the modification of the south parapet and the boarded up windows, this factory retains much of its historic integrity. It remains virtually intact, including the retention of the company's sign, the freight elevator, the wooden stairwell and open pipe rail stairs, and all window and door openings. Unfortunately, the spiral fire escape on the facade has been lost due to severe rust and structural deterioration, but its removal was approved by the National Park Service as part of the current rehabilitation project. All of the upper floors of the building retain their open floor plates with exposed structural supports from the days of tobacco manufacture. Although most of the windows have deteriorated and been boarded over, they retain their original framing and sills and examples of all three window types are still intact at various locations, which simplifies the repairs and replication underway as part of the current historic rehabilitation project. The interior trim around the wooden windows is still in good condition, including the original stools, jams, aprons, inside casing, and window framing. Most of the steel windows were also in place, but deteriorated, with the pivot sections removed for safety reasons. The John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is still a very significant reminder of the importance of the tobacco factories in St. Louis's early industrial development.

The rehabilitation project that is currently underway has already made masonry repairs, begun reopening all of the historic window openings (on all elevations and all levels) and installing new windows replicating the historic windows, and renovating the interior while retaining the open floor plates. The intent is to convert the lower levels into the headquarters of the REACT Environmental Engineers operation, with the upper levels developed later as lease space, all in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and with the approval of the National Park Service.

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Buildings
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO

Locating Property



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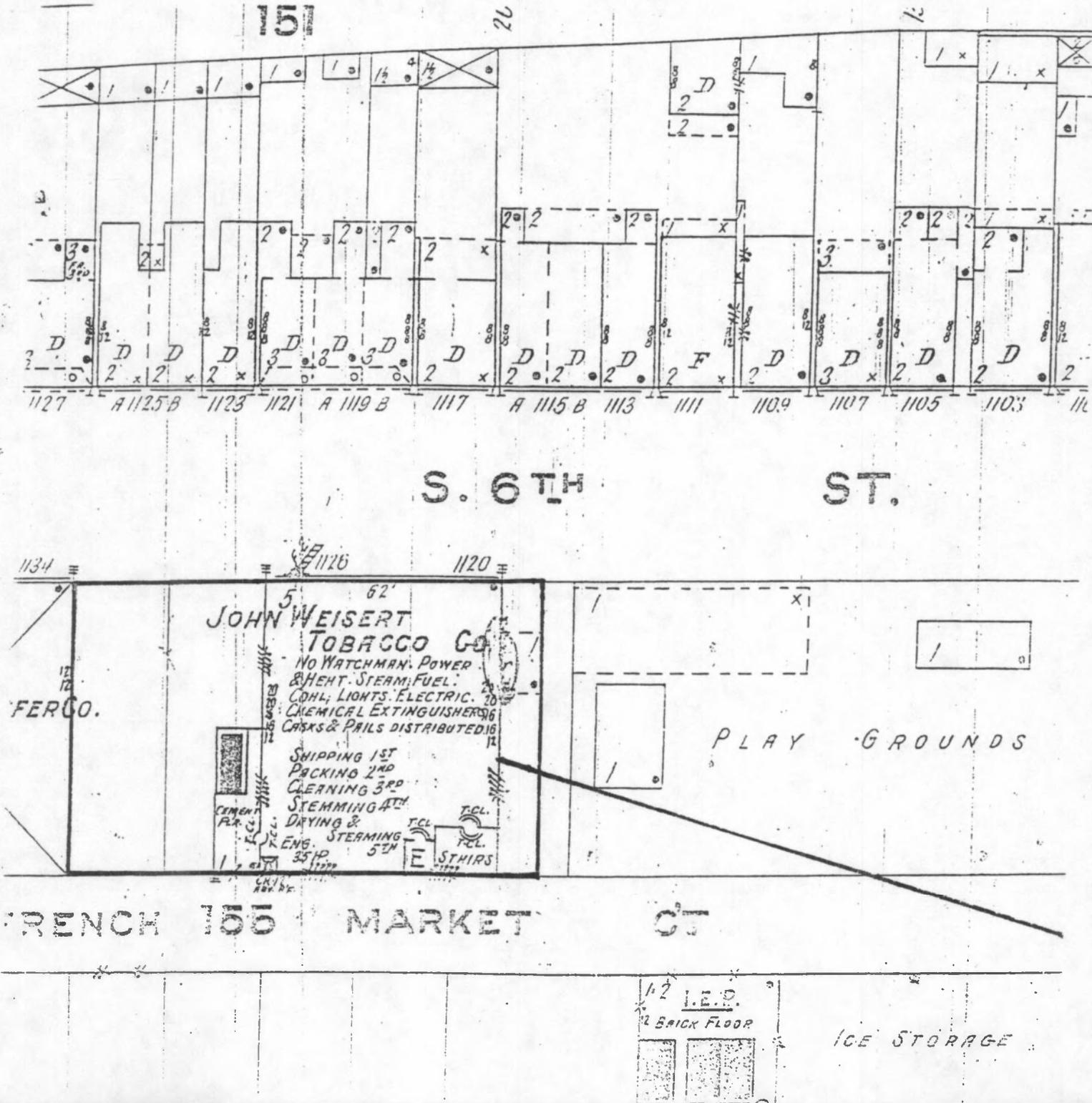
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John Weisert Tobacco Company Buildings
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Sanborn Map Company, 1907

Locating Property



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

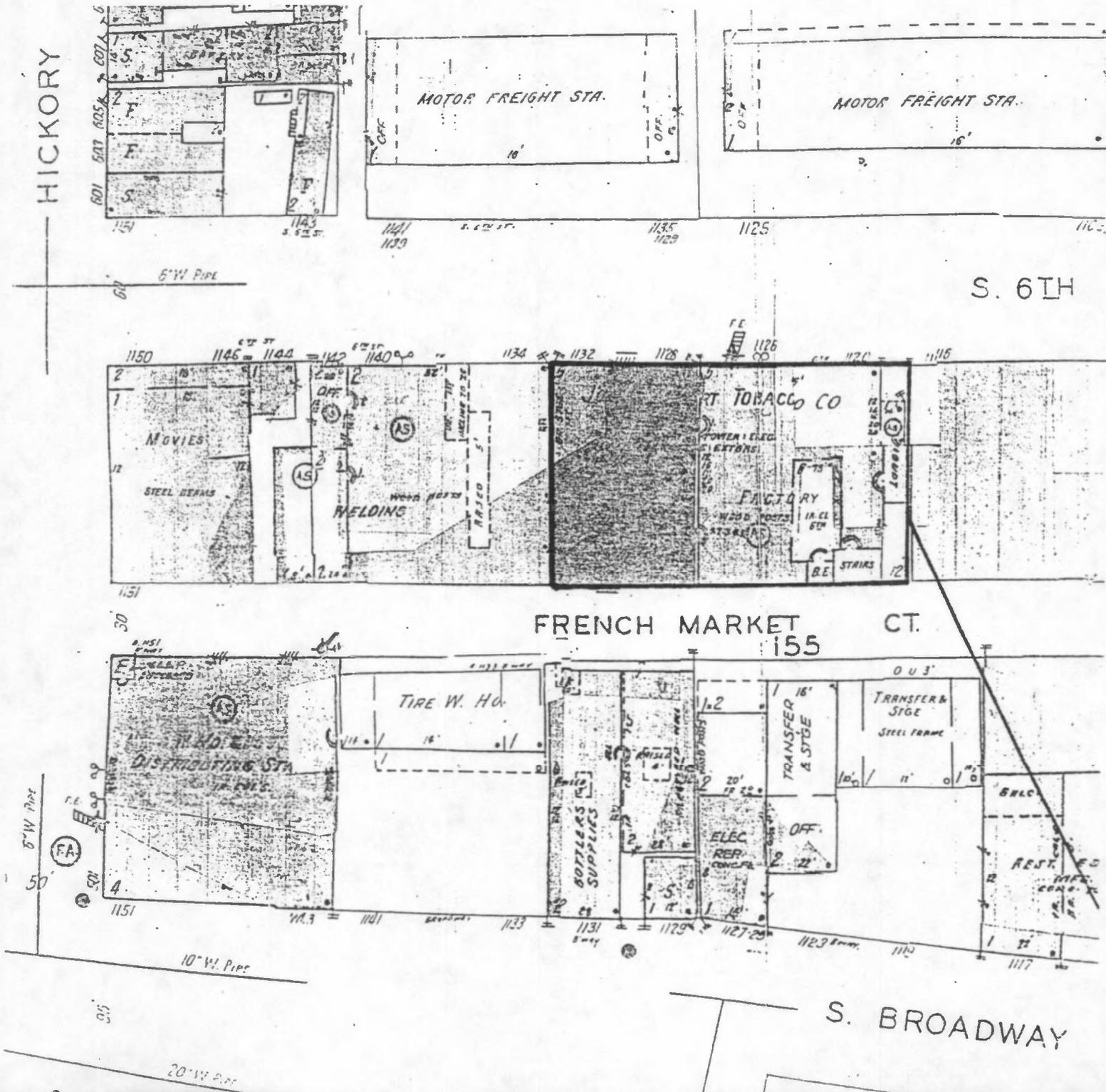
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John Weisert Tobacco Company Buildings
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Sanborn Map Company, 1932, 1951 corrected

Locating Property



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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Architect/Builder

Hirsh, H.L./Contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

SUMMARY

The John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is locally significant under Criterion A: Industry. The John Weisert Company was a major player during the years when St. Louis led the nation in the manufacturing of tobacco products and was the last tobacco company in St. Louis to go out of business. Over four hundred tobacco firms were active locally when the industry peaked in St. Louis at the beginning of the twentieth century, and John Weisert was among the city's major producers of chewing tobacco and cigars. Weisert constructed the north half of the tobacco factory in 1903 and added the south half of the building in 1922. The nominated building was where Weisert's chewing tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco, pipe tobacco, and hand-rolled cigars were produced for some 86 years. Today the Weisert Building at 1120 South Sixth Street is one of the few remaining examples of the turn of the century tobacco industry in St. Louis. Despite minor exterior modifications, it retains its historic integrity and therefore remains a significant and prominent reminder of the tobacco industry in St. Louis. The period of significance begins in 1903 when the factory was completed and ends in 1954, the arbitrary 50-year cutoff date for National Register listing, although the John Weisert Tobacco Company occupied the building until the company closed in 1989.

BUILDING HISTORY

Designed by architect Anton Rieve, the oldest portion of the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building was completed in 1903 to be used for manufacturing and for the company's offices.¹ In 1922, a warehouse addition, designed by architect Edward Lantz, who also designed the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Building, was added to the south side of the building. The contractor on the warehouse addition was H. O. Hirsh, the same company that built the Wainwright Building (listed on the National Register in May 23, 1968) designed by Louis Sullivan.² The John Weisert Tobacco Company continued to use the building until the company folded in 1989. By 1990, the building was being rented out to various companies to use as office space and warehouse space. These companies included the Allen and Allen Agency, the Hart Specialty Company, and The Negative Image. These businesses continued to use the space until the late 1990s, before it became a simple warehouse.³ The present owners, REACT Environmental Engineers purchased the building in 2002 to use for their offices and operations center and are currently completing their historic rehabilitation project. Even today, the upper levels retain the physical evidence of its years of use for tobacco manufacture with the aroma of the tobacco, the two level drying kiln, the open floor plates, and the signs, posters and photos pasted on the walls.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY IN ST. LOUIS

Tobacco was cultivated in Missouri as soon as the first European settlers crossed the Mississippi. The early French-Canadian settlers generally used snuff, and quickly found that Missouri's soil was ideal for growing tobacco, although almost all Missouri tobacco grown in the earliest years of the state's settlement was for the personal use of the farmers. It was not very long before the situation changed, though, and Missouri quickly became one of the top tobacco producing states before the Civil War with the tobacco shipped down river to the markets in New Orleans. By the 1820s tobacco manufacturing companies began to appear in St. Louis and around the state, quickly growing into a major industry. To ensure consistency in grading Missouri's tobacco, the state established a clearinghouse in St. Louis, through which more than 90 percent of the state's production passed. Although stunted by the Civil War, Missouri's tobacco production quickly resumed and tobacco industry became one of the largest industries in St. Louis in the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴

The first tobacco company opened in St. Louis in 1817, with a small amount of chewing tobacco, snuff, and cigar manufacturing.⁵ By the mid-1820s, tobacco was becoming a major cash crop in Missouri, especially in the counties on either sides of the Missouri River. In 1824, 38 hogsheads of tobacco were sold in New York City "at the highest price, being pronounced superior to any other description of tobacco in the market."⁶ As the production in the state increased, it began to be shipped to St. Louis for manufacture. Tobacco farming in Missouri continued to grow until the outbreak of the Civil War (1861-1865), so that by 1860, over 25 million pounds of tobacco were grown in Missouri.⁷

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The tobacco cultivation in Missouri started declining drastically after the Civil War, since the labor-intensive nature of tobacco cultivation made tobacco a much less profitable product with paid labor than it had been under slavery. Tobacco required the farmer to sow the seeds in plant beds in February and the plants were laid out in widely spaced rows in late May or early June. The ground had to be thoroughly prepared ahead of time and even after planting the ground had to be hoed around the plants at least every two weeks. In addition, once the stalks began to appear, tobacco flies became a threat to the crop and a labor-intensive de-worming process ensued to protect the crop. Each day, each leaf had to be individually inspected and any larval flies removed. Without proper worming, the entire crop could be destroyed in as little as two days. Therefore, many of the changes in Missouri tobacco industries reflect the broader social and economic changes in post Civil War America.

At the same time, tobacco was much harder on the land and grain crops were bringing more money at market. These factors caused tobacco cultivation in Missouri to decline tremendously, so that within ten years, the cultivation had dropped in half, with just over twelve million pounds grown in the 1870s and only 2.25 million pounds grown in the decade of the 1900s. Tobacco farming did regain a foothold in Missouri as the twentieth century progressed, so that by the 1950s, Missouri was fifteenth in tobacco cultivation out of the eighteen states that grew tobacco, although the production still only amounted to about 3000 acres of farmland producing 4,650,000 pounds of tobacco.⁸ Despite the decline in cultivation, the production of finished tobacco products in Missouri increased from over 33 million pounds in 1873 (the earliest production total found) to over 47 million pounds in 1888.⁹

Beginning in 1833, St. Louis' tobacco industry began to grow into prominence. In that year Christopher Foulks started a tobacco company that was succeeded by J.E. Liggett & Brothers, becoming Liggett & Myers in 1878, a company that is still in existence today. This was the beginning of one of the largest tobacco companies in the world, and was the beginning of a growing trend in St. Louis. The production of finished tobacco products in St. Louis relied on tobacco shipped in from other tobacco producing states, such as Kentucky (which led the country in tobacco cultivation), Tennessee, Ohio and Virginia. By 1879, St. Louis led the world in tobacco manufacturing, and turned out over a fifth of the tobacco manufactured in the country. By 1890 St. Louis was producing more than twice as much tobacco as the next nearest city in the United States even though tobacco was only the sixth largest industry in St. Louis. Liggett & Myers had become the largest tobacco company in the world while the Drummond Company, and other tobacco companies in St. Louis approached its output. St. Louis also served as a distribution point for finished tobacco products, with 25 million pounds of tobacco received in 1892 in St. Louis, while the city exported just under 77 million pounds of finished tobacco that same year. At first, most of the tobacco was used to make fine-cut chewing tobacco. Although pipe tobacco mixes, roll-your-own cigarette tobacco, snuff, and cigars were all made in St. Louis, chewing tobacco, both fine cut and plug, was the main product.¹⁰

By the turn of the century, plug chewing tobacco was becoming the most common tobacco product in the country, after having been invented almost simultaneously in the mid-nineteenth century near St. Louis in two of Missouri's largest tobacco growing counties, in St. Charles County and Pike County, although the St. Louis producers made the transition with little problem. Plug tobacco was first made by hollowing out the center of a green log of maple or hickory. The tobacco was mixed with honey and homemade peach or apple brandy and then forced into the hole in the log. The hole was plugged, and the log was left to dry. Once dry, the log would be split open and the tobacco inside would also have been dried, flavored, and cured inside the log, leaving a plug of chewing tobacco ready for sale or consumption. When plug tobacco began to enter industrial production in addition to the fine cut chewing tobacco that had been predominant, manufacturers began including more flavors, with licorice leading the pack, but rum, honey, sugar, wintergreen, and various other spices also being used to flavor the tobacco. From its invention shortly after the Civil War ended in 1865 until World War I (1914-1919), plug tobacco was the most widely used and popular form of tobacco in the United States.¹¹

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Despite the tremendous growth in the production of tobacco products in St. Louis, the industry was not in perfect shape. In 1893, James B. Duke, owner of the American Tobacco Company which dominated the cigarette industry (still in its infancy and only a small fraction of the tobacco industry) moved into the plug tobacco field in an attempt to create a monopoly in the tobacco markets. Duke quickly purchased the Drummond Company, as well as local companies, the Brown Company, the Catlin Company, and many of the other smaller plug tobacco manufacturers. The John Weisert Tobacco Company was able to survive Duke's takeover spree, as was Liggett & Myers, at least initially. By 1904 a Wall Street syndicate led by Thomas Ryan formed to challenge Duke in his attempt to create a monopoly. Despite the frenzied work to secure the option and prevent Duke's monopoly, Ryan sold the company within a year to the Continental Tobacco Company that Duke owned through the American Tobacco Company. The sale by Ryan allowed Duke to succeed in his bid for a monopoly in the industry as he consolidated most of the formerly independent producers into the fold of the American Tobacco Company.¹² Unlike many of the other St. Louis based companies, the John Weisert Tobacco Company was able to survive this threat and continue to prosper under local ownership.

In 1911, the tobacco trust was reorganized after the government succeeded in winning a charge of conspiring to form a monopoly in violation of the Sherman Act. The trust was divided into four competing successor firms, one of which was Liggett & Myers, whose St. Louis factory continued to lead the world in plug tobacco production but New York interests owned the company and its headquarters had been moved to North Carolina. After Theodore Roosevelt's trust busting, the industry had four massive companies in the United States (those companies that were created by the restructuring of Duke's company by the government in response to the Sherman Act adjudication), in addition to the few companies that had survived the monopolization attempts of the American Tobacco Company, including the John Weisert Tobacco Company.¹³ The John Weisert Tobacco Company continued to exist and thrive throughout this tumultuous period in the industry, often taking advantage of the financial collapse of other companies to buy the brand names from the failing companies and expand their line of products as their competition decreased.¹⁴

Despite the turmoil caused by Duke, the industry remained very strong in St. Louis through World War I and into the 1920s. However, with World War I the consumption of tobacco changed, with cigarettes beginning to make inroads into the chewing tobacco market, which it eventually overtook. In 1914, Missouri's factories produced over 70 million pounds of tobacco products, almost 40 percent of the entire national production.¹⁵ By 1918, the United States Army began issuing tobacco to soldiers, with four-tenths of an ounce issued to each soldier each day with cigarette papers included for those who preferred to smoke their tobacco rather than chew it. The commissaries sold the most popular brands of cigars and cigarettes, at cost and in unlimited quantities per soldier. The availability of cigarettes for soldiers during the war expanded that market at the expense of plug tobacco and cigars, the primary tobacco products manufactured in St. Louis. Prior to the war, cigarettes were seen as a foreign curiosity and not a manly product to use, yet it was not considered appropriate for women to smoke them either. This slowed the growth of the cigarette market after its initial introduction to America. During World War I, though, as the army gave away tobacco with rolling papers and sold cigarettes cheaply in the commissaries, the doughboys began to switch to cigarettes. As a result, the cigarette became an acceptable form of tobacco for men to use.¹⁶

The improving popularity of the cigarette was further aided by the fact that one of the first cigarette drummers in St. Louis was a Mrs. Leonard, who was hired by Edward Featherstone Small, one of Duke's top lieutenants at the American Tobacco Company. The Leonard-Small team had tremendous success, and Leonard appeared in headlines around the country as the world's first female cigarette drummer. They were able to capitalize on the publicity and the already increased popularity of the cigarette with returning GIs to help the cigarette become the preferred form of tobacco consumption in the United States.¹⁷

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The St. Louis tobacco companies did not switch to cigarette production. They continued primarily to make chewing tobacco, as well as pipe tobacco, snuff, hand-rolled cigars, and tobacco for roll-your-own cigarettes. As the cigarette increased in popularity, these other forms of tobacco saw sales dip. Changes in the American way of life were also conspiring to improve the cigarette's popularity. As one of Liggett & Myers general managers commented to an employee in 1914, "you can't chew and spit in a car"¹⁸ while cigarettes were seen as less of a fire hazard to smoke in factory conditions than were cigars, while avoiding the inherent problems of tobacco spittle on factory floors with chewing tobacco.¹⁹

After World War I, St. Louis continued to be one of the leading manufacturers in the country for chewing tobacco, whether plug or fine cut, but this market was declining. This was the beginning of the end for the St. Louis tobacco industry though, since it was focused largely on plug and fine cut chewing tobacco, as well as some cigar making, instead of the new and growing cigarette market. Despite these changes in the industry, after World War I, St. Louis was still one of the leading manufacturers of tobacco in the United States, but the industry had started a downward trend in the city, rapidly reducing Missouri to a tobacco cultivating state with little tobacco manufacturing left. Nonetheless, St. Louis continued to do well in a new aspect of the tobacco industry: the cigarette-vending machine. By the late 1950s and into the early 1960s St. Louis lead the country in the manufacture and production of cigarette-vending machines, adding a new chapter to St. Louis commerce's long ties to the tobacco industry.²⁰

Of these major companies, the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is one of only four known remaining tobacco company complexes in St. Louis, along with the Christian Peper Tobacco Company, located on North First Street (Laclede's Landing, NR 8/25/76), the Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company Building, located at 1900-1912 Pine Street (NR 2/10/83), and the Brown Tobacco Company Building at Eighteenth Street and Chouteau. The John Weisert Tobacco Company Building was the last company in the city manufacturing tobacco products after the Liggett & Myers factory closed late in 1972, (and that company had not been locally owned since the early 1900s). After the close of the John Weisert Tobacco Company in 1989, the tobacco industry in St. Louis came to an end.

JOHN WEISERT TOBACCO COMPANY HISTORY

John Weisert was a German immigrant who first settled in Virginia, starting a tobacco company there in 1855. By 1880, he had apparently moved his company to St. Louis where it was established as the Weisert Brothers Tobacco Company. The officers were Weisert's sons, John Weisert, Jr. and Albert Weisert, who by this time apparently had inherited the company. In 1902, John Weisert Jr. left the Weisert Brothers Tobacco Company, located at 1314 Merchant (now the site of the Poplar Street Bridge), to start his own company, the John Weisert Tobacco Company. The first year, the business was located in an old building at 214 Pine Street, a site that is no longer extant and was razed during the land clearance in downtown St. Louis for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. The following year, the growing company completed and moved into its new building at 1120 South Sixth Street. The factory was used to make fine cut chewing tobacco, plug chewing tobacco, roll-your-own cigarette tobacco, snuff and hand-rolled cigars. The company grew quickly under the leadership of its namesake and increased its product line, adding new brands for all of their products as the efforts to expand led to continued success.²¹

These efforts included various mixes for the chewing tobacco, marketed to different demographics depending on the cut, processing and flavoring of the product. Generally, tobacco chewers in the north preferred heavily sweetened and flavored products, with the most common flavoring being licorice. In the local Missouri markets, and other markets in the south, particularly in the tobacco growing states of Kentucky and Virginia, the preferred brands were very lightly sweetened and flavored, leaving the leaf near to its natural state. Most of the sailors, whether the local riverman or on the open seas, generally liked their tobacco very strong and almost black. Because of the varying tastes in the market, it was beneficial for a company to have various products to meet these tastes. As a result, the John Weisert Tobacco Company had many different product lines, and at its peak had over 100 brands of chewing tobacco and cigars.²²

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Many of these brands were acquired from other tobacco companies as those companies went out of business. During the period when Duke was trying to consolidate the industry into a monopoly led by the American Tobacco Company, he used a massive price-cutting strategy that forced many of the smaller manufacturers out of business. As these companies collapsed, the John Weisert Tobacco Company was able to buy many of the brand names of the failing companies. Even after the 1911 antitrust suit ended, The John Weisert Tobacco Company continued to buy closing manufacturer's brand names, including the entire cigar line of the Joseph Menedez Cigar Company. Some of the other brand names acquired by the company included:

- Drummer Boy
- Orphan Boy
- Joysmoke "the Happy Smoke"
- Delmar Smoking Tobacco manufactured specifically for the Delmar Tobacco Shop at Delmar and Euclid
- Fraternity Pipe Mixture, which was packaged for members of Sigma Pi, Tau Kappa Epsilon, and other fraternities
- Blood Plug cut "Blood Will Tell"
- Cherry Diamond Club Special, manufactured and packaged for the Missouri Athletic Club (MAC)
- Screamer²³

These were but a small number of some of the more notable brands the John Weisert Tobacco Company purchased from other companies and began to manufacture for their own company. In addition to the many brands bought after other companies went under, John Weisert Tobacco Company started some of its own brands.²⁴

The John Weisert Tobacco Company had to quit making its own cigars in 1976, when Louis Applestein, the last cigar hand-roller in the city, died at the age of 83. After the death of Applestein, the company was limited to a number of brands of roll-your-own tobacco and chewing tobacco, but almost all of these products were purchased as cigar cuttings from other companies. Walter Weisert, the grandson of the company's founder, would add the flavors to the cigar cuttings himself and was the only employee, working as president, staff and production crew for the company, by the time the John Weisert Tobacco Company closed its doors for the last time. The company remained in the family until it went out of business in 1987, after 133 years of business in the tobacco industry.²⁵ This brought to an end the tobacco manufacturing industry in St. Louis, an industry in which, at the time the company was at its peak, St. Louis led the world in production, supplying a full fifth of the tobacco produced in the United States.

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

ENDNOTES

- ¹ "John Weisert Tobacco Company Factory," stored at Missouri Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, Jefferson City, Missouri.
- ² "Building News: Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record* (16 March, 1922).
- ³ *Haines Crisscross St. Louis City and County Crisscross Directory* (Maryland Heights, MO: Haines and Co., Inc. 1990), 2.
- ⁴ R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), xiii, 80-102, 306; Merchant's Exchange of St. Louis, George H. Morgan, ed., *Annual Report of the Trade and Commerce of Saint Louis for 1889* (St. Louis: R. P. Studley and Company, 1891), 171; The Tobacco Institute, Inc., *Missouri and Tobacco: A Chapter in America's Industrial Growth*, Tobacco History Series (Washington D.C.: The Tobacco Institute, 1960), 4-6.
- ⁵ The Tobacco Institute, 8.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, 5.
- ⁷ Walter Williams and Floyd Shoemaker, *Missouri, Mother of the West* (Chicago: American Historical Society 1930), 347.
- ⁸ Charles Menees, "Pictures Staff Clippings," *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* Clippings Files.
- ⁹ M.M. Yeakle, "Commercial and Manufacturing Growth," *The City of St. Louis of Today* (St. Louis: J. Osmun Yeakle and Company, 1889), 217-219.
- ¹⁰ M.M. Yeakle, 217-218; *Greater St. Louis: Official Bulletin of the Chamber of Commerce*, 2 (November 1920): 6.
- ¹¹ "Wentzville Tobacco Company Factory Building," National Register of Historic Places Inventory- Nomination Form.
- ¹² Landmarks Association of Saint Louis, "Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company Building," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, listed 10 February 1983; The Tobacco Institute, 11.
- ¹³ Landmarks Association of Saint Louis, "Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company Building," 8-1-8-3; John M. McGuire, "Tobacco-Case Defendant Has St. Louis Roots," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 23 March 1997, 1E; John M. McGuire, "The Last Tobacco Company," *St. Louis Commerce: Official Publication of St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association*, 55 (June 1981).
- ¹⁴ McGuire, "The Last Tobacco Company."
- ¹⁵ The Tobacco Institute, 8.
- ¹⁶ "St. Louis Maintains Its Rank as the Largest Tobacco Manufacturing Center in the World," *Greater St. Louis: Official Bulletin of the Chamber of Commerce*. 2 November 1920.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ McGuire, "Tobacco-Case Defendant Has St. Louis Roots," *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 March 1997, 1E.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*.
- ²⁰ The Tobacco Institute, 11; "City, State Tobacco Role Told in Booklet" *St. Louis Clippings* Vol. 8, p. 196, (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society,) Taken from *Saint Louis Globe-Democrat* 1 February, 1960.
- ²¹ McGuire, "The Last Tobacco Company."
- ²² *Ibid*.
- ²³ William Stage, *Mound City Chronicles* (St. Louis: Hartmann Publishing Company, 1991), 163.
- ²⁴ McGuire, "The Last Tobacco Company."
- ²⁵ Stage, *Mound City Chronicles*, 163.

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the John Weisert Tobacco Company Building is described as Lots 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Convent Block Subdivision and in Block 155 of the City of St. Louis, together fronting 150 feet on the east line of Sixth Street by a depth eastwardly of 90 feet to French Market Court.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description. Except for public sidewalks and a small area behind the building at the back alley, the building encompasses the entire lot.

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John Weisert Tobacco Company Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Photo Log

Photographer: Mandy Ford
July 2002

Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #1: Exterior, west-side detail of original entrance and sign

Photo #2: Exterior, corner of south and east elevation looking NE

Photo #3: Exterior, backside of east elevation looking NW

Photographer: Todd Owyong
September 2002

Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #4: Exterior; northside elevation of loading dock

Photo #5: Interior northside 1st floor looking north at doors

Photo #6: Interior northside 2nd floor looking NW

Photo #7: Interior northside 3rd floor looking southwest

Photo #8: Interior northside 1st floor in stairwell looking down to east and south

Photo #9: Interior, northside 1st floor looking east at elevator

Photo #10: Interior, southside 4th floor looking east at three windows

Photo #11: Interior; northside 4th floor looking west at heater.

Photo #12: Interior; northside 5th floor looking southeast at drying rack

Photo#13: Interior; northside middle 4th floor looking up and southeast at pulleys by heaters

Photo #14: Interior; northside 4th floor looking southwest at heater

Photo #15: Interior; southside 1st floor looking northwest across loading dock

Photo #16: Interior, southside 3rd floor looking southwest

Photo #17: Interior; southside 4th floor looking northwest

Photo#18: Interior; southside 4th floor looking west up the stairs



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