

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wood Building (Preferred)

other names/site number Central Inn; Central Hotel; Central Tavern; Central Bar; Corner Inn; Corner Pub; Mac's Tavern

2. Location

street & number 1 - 3 S. Frederick & 605 - 607 Independence Streets [N/A] not for publication

city or town Cape Girardeau [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Cape Girardeau code 031 zip code 63701

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 10/29/03
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Historic and Architectural Resources of Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Multiple Dwelling

Domestic: Hotel

Commerce / Trade: Restaurant

Commerce / Trade: Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Multiple Dwelling

Commerce / Trade: Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Two-Part Commercial Block

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Cast Iron

Wood

Ceramic Tile

Concrete

Glass

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Commerce

Period of Significance

1910 - 1953

Significant Dates

1910

1913

1919

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1][6]	[2][7][6][1][3][0]	[4][1][3][1][5][8][0]	2	[][]	[][][][]	[][][][]	[][][][]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing	
3	[][]	[][][][][]	[][][][][]	4	[][]	[][][][][]	[][][][][]	[][][][][]
								[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debbie Bibb and Cathy Grove

organization Southeast Missouri State University date June 27, 2003
C/O Dr. Steven Hoffman

street & number 311T Camahan Hall telephone (573) 651-2808
Mail Stop 2960

city or town Cape Girardeau state MO zip code 63701

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 (2 copies)

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property and interior. Historic photographs when available.

Additional items: Floor Plans

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

Property Owner

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

name John Boos

street & number 605 Independence Street telephone (573) 335-5676

city or town Cape Girardeau state MO zip code 63701

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Summary:

Constructed circa 1908 to 1910, the Wood Building (Preferred) is located on the southwest corner of Independence and Frederick Streets in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. It has one primary address at 605 Independence Street, and three original, intact, business entrances on the first story - 607 Independence Street on the north, and 1 and 3 South Frederick Street on the east. It is a rectangular, three-story, two-part commercial block building that was assembled using a load-bearing wall system of varying shades of red brick.¹ It is representative of the property type "Commercial Buildings, ca. 1850-1950" as listed in the MPS *Historical and Architectural Resources of Cape Girardeau, Missouri* (NR 7/20/22). An original, decorative sheet-metal cornice wraps around the primary (east) and north elevations. A wall cornice divides the first and second stories on the east, and also appears at the corners on the north elevation. The building's minimal elaboration includes late 19th and early 20th Century Revival features such as a smooth exterior finish, a prominent parapet, a cast-iron column at the recessed corner entrance of 1 South Frederick Street, and on the west and south elevations, large, rectangular windows with segmental arches and cast-stone sills.² The design includes three bays, two on the east elevation and one on the north. The east and north elevations, which are clearly visible to passersby, are more elaborate than the other two elevations. The Wood Building is situated on the edge of downtown Cape Girardeau, near the Haarg Commercial Historic District (NR 7/20/00). The south and west elevations face an adjacent yard and alleyway, respectively. Across Independence Street are other commercial establishments, and on the opposite (northwest) corner sits a red brick building that served as the police station and courthouse during the Wood Building's period of significance. It has served as a hotel and rooming house and as the home for commercial enterprises - most notably a brothel, a speakeasy, and numerous taverns, including one in operation today (Mac's Tavern). Although some repairs have been necessary, all maintenance has been carried out by recycling as many of the original materials as was feasible, by remaining faithful to the original motif, and by utilizing original workmanship techniques whenever possible. Interior elements such as walls, flooring, stairways, closets, doors, moldings and trim are also nearly all original. With most of its architectural features intact, the integrity of the Wood Building has been carefully preserved.

Exterior:

This three-story, rectangular, two-part commercial block exhibits late 19th and early 20th Century Revival influences. According to Sanborn maps, the Wood Building was under construction but unfinished in 1908.³ Composed of varying shades of red brick laid in a modified running bond pattern, it exhibits distinctive architectural features on each elevation. No blueprints, architectural drawings, or early photographs have been located.

All exterior windows are original with a one-over-one configuration and wood sash. Each contains the original commercial-grade glass, except in a few instances where breakage required replacement. Windows on the south and west elevations have segmental brick arches; windows on the north and east elevations have flat arches. Although aluminum storm windows have been installed, all original windows are intact. The roofline consists of a crenellated parapet on the east elevation, and a stepped parapet wall on the north and south elevations that slopes downward toward the back (west) elevation, which has no parapet. In 1980, by which time the original lime mortar had deteriorated, the current owner disassembled and rebuilt much of the brickwork along all sides of the parapet for safety reasons while maintaining the original design and materials.

There are two capped chimneys on the north elevation, as well as two on the south and two on the west.

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All chimneys were repaired at the same time as the parapet, and in similar fashion, with the exception of the northern chimney on the west elevation. That chimney was dismantled to below the roofline because of its hazardous condition, and, although the original flue remains, the chimney was never rebuilt. In most areas, the parapet and chimneys retain their original ceramic-tile coping. In 1995 all previous roofing layers were removed and a new roof was added using the design of the original as well as similar construction techniques and materials.

The east (front) elevation of the Wood Building is symmetrical with a crenellated parapet, overhanging eaves, and wide iron entablature. There is one deeply recessed rectangular window at the center of the third story on this elevation, the top half of which was converted into a vent in 1987 or 1988 in order to accommodate an attic fan. The current owner is planning on returning the original window in the near future. There are three evenly-spaced windows on either side of this center window, and all seven openings have cast-stone sills. The second story has seven rectangular openings directly beneath those of the third floor. The center opening is a fire escape door. All second story windows have cast-stone lintels and sills. Two iron brackets that once supported the fire escape are directly above the second story doorway. The original fire escape stairs are in the owner's possession. They were removed due to safety concerns. A second cornice line divides the first story from the second on this elevation.

The first floor of the front (east) elevation is divided into two storefronts. The south recessed entrance at 3 South Frederick Street contains large, original display windows on either side that are offset from the south corner of the building by approximately one foot. A single step, which is patterned with original blue and white octagonal ceramic tiles, leads to the doorway. The north business entrance at 1 South Frederick Street is the focal point of the building. It has been set on a diagonal to the corner of the building and original display windows of a slightly different design than those at 3 South Frederick Street adorn either side. Moreover, it has the same original ceramic tilework design on the step, as does the entrance to 3 South Frederick Street. A cast iron column with a volute capital and a plain base supports the front corner of the building, and a sandstone foundation with an iron cap is visible along this east elevation. An old coal chute on the sidewalk in front of this elevation has been filled in with concrete and does not affect the integrity of the building.

The Wood Building's north elevation faces Independence Street. The parapet is stepped and there are two chimneys, one located toward the center and one toward the east end. The roofline includes a detailed sheet-metal cornice that wraps around the north and east elevations. A lower cornice divides the first and second stories on only the east and west ends of this elevation. Windows are similar to those on the east elevation. The third floor has one group of three windows offset from the west corner of the building by approximately three feet. Another set of two windows is located about three feet west of the first set, followed by another set of two again separated by about three feet of brick. The next opening is a large two-story window with two lights above the main opening and another running the full width below the window. A final third story window is approximately three feet farther west. The second floor of the north elevation has the same window openings as the third floor, with the exception of the large window toward the back (west) elevation. This is where the large window from the third floor continues down into the second story.

The first story of the north elevation has a continuation of the display windows from 1 South Frederick Street. The next window on this level is lined up with the last window in the set of three on the floors above it. The subsequent two sets of windows follow the same patterns as those of the floors above. The last window is followed by a doorway with a four-light transom above it that has been covered with plywood. A raised wooden-panel door with a Classical Revival pediment above and a full sidelight to the east adorns this entrance. Steps on the west end of

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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

this elevation lead to an enclosed cypress porch on the second floor. On the sidewalk just east of the entrance to 605 Independence is another filled-in coal chute that also does not detract from the integrity of the building.

Finally, the north elevation contains star and rod bolts that the current owner added in the fall of 1987 to increase the structural stability of the building in the event of an earthquake. While not original, they were obtained from a shoe factory in Cape Girardeau that had been constructed at approximately the same time as the Wood Building, and are appropriate to the time period of the Wood Building's significance.

The west elevation faces an alleyway. With the exception of the third story, this elevation is primarily covered by the rear porch and stairs. The roofline on this side has no parapet or cornice board; it does, however, have a central chimney. All three stories on this elevation contain two windows on either side of a central doorway. These openings are spaced equally across the elevation and are lined up directly with one another all the way to the basement. The windows are different from those on the east and north elevations in that they have a segmental arch made out of the same brick as the rest of the building above them, and a stone lintel below. The porch on this side was constructed in 1984 to replace what remained of the tornado-damaged, deteriorated and dangerous original porch, which covered both the second and third stories. Because the porch on the third story had consisted of nothing more than a floor and railings, only a porch for the second story was rebuilt in a manner faithful to the original design. Usable original boards, augmented by materials from a house older than the Wood Building, were employed, and the siding for the porch came from a butchering shed associated with that same older house.

Like the west elevation, the south elevation of the building has no cornice board at the roofline. It does, however, have a stepped parapet and two chimneys like those on the north. The windows on this elevation are similar to those of the west elevation, with segmental brick arches and cast-stone lintels. Beginning from the west side, the second and third floor windows are the same in size and spacing - a group of two larger windows followed by a group of two smaller windows. These groupings are then followed by one window that is larger than the others.

A final set of two large windows is set about four feet from the east corner of the building. The windows on the first floor of the south elevation are similar in design to those on the second and third floors; however, the number and spacing is different. From the west corner of the building there is one window that is lined up with the first window in the floors above it, and it has been covered with wood. The next window is centered under the first window in the sets on the second and third stories above it. Another window is centered under the single windows near the center of the building on the upper levels; however, it is shorter than the two above it. Finally, a set of two windows follows toward the front. The first is aligned below the last window in the sets above it; the second is set toward the front of the building with no windows above it at all. Furthermore, there are star and rod bolts on this elevation that correspond to those on the north elevation.

Interior:

The Wood Building accommodated three businesses on the first story, and had approximately 10 rooms on each of the top two floors that were used for both boarders and hotel guests. The overall integrity of the Wood Building's interior is intact. With the exception of the removal of a single bathroom at the west end of the second and third floors, and slight modifications to the main hallways that were done to accommodate one apartment on each of the upper two stories, the building's interior remains essentially unchanged.

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Wood Building (Preferred)
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At the eastern end of the north side of the third story are four adjacent rooms that have not been changed over the years (see floor plan pg. 7.9). The first opens onto a hallway and is connected to the room directly to its west. Both of these rooms have closets on either side of the connecting door. Continuing toward the west end of this north side, the third and fourth rooms do not connect to any other room, but open onto the hallway. Unlike the other two, these rooms have no closets, and, while the third room is very plain, the fourth looks as though it had, at one time, been used as an office. There is a five-foot high wainscoting on the walls of this room, as well as a telephone outlet. Old telephone numbers, which appear to date back to the 1920s and 1930s, are visible on the wall near the telephone jack. To the west of this room is the original "U" shaped staircase, which leads all the way to the first floor.

The stairs were constructed of darkly stained wood and form the main access to both the second and third floors from the first floor entrance at 605 Independence Street. Graffiti, in the form of names and initials, can be seen on the third-story banister. There is one drop-down pendant hanging below the third floor landing under the balustrade, and two more are suspended from the second floor landing under the same balustrade; all appear to be original.

The final and westernmost room on the north side of the third story has been converted into a bedroom for the third-floor apartment. The current owner has added a closet in this room. South of this bedroom, along the west side of the third story, what was once a bathroom for the entire floor has been converted into a living room for the apartment. A living room door opens out onto what is now the roof of the rear porch. Moreover, an open staircase with a dark wood banister leads from the living room to the second floor. As was the case in the bedroom, a closet has been added in the living room, and an interior wall was constructed to create a hallway leading to a new triangular-shaped bathroom. The original hallway configuration was modified slightly in order to accommodate the new space.

Heading from the living room toward the east along the south side of the third floor, the next room in the apartment is now the kitchen. In this room, the original door leading back into the original hallway is still in place. The second bedroom of the apartment is the next room to the east, and only changes in this room have been the removal of the original door into the hall and the addition of a closet.

The final three rooms along the south side of the third floor are not part of the apartment and remain unchanged. They are similar to the rooms directly across the original hallway, which is approximately seven feet wide at its widest point on the west end of the building and only five feet wide at its narrowest point on the eastern end. This seems to have been done in order to maintain the symmetry of the seven windows along the front elevation.

The layout of the second floor - including the second floor apartment - is virtually identical to that of the third floor, with three exceptions: the removal of an original closet in what is now the apartment living room, the construction of a new living room wall, and the removal of the wall between the two middle rooms on the north side of the second floor that are not connected to the apartment (see floor plan pg. 7.8). The remains of early vinyl flooring can be seen in one of the original rooms, and the south room on the eastern side of the second floor contains the only fireplace in the building. This fireplace is original, was probably fabricated from darkly stained oak, and has simple yet elegant lines.

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Wood Building (Preferred)
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Except in the apartments, all second and third floor rooms measure approximately twelve feet by fifteen feet. Even in the apartments, virtually all baseboards, moldings and trims are original. Some of the original raised-panel, pine doors were used within the apartments, and the others are still in place in the rooms outside of the apartments. Most still have their original room numbers affixed to them. Doorknobs and hardware are generally original, although they vary widely in design. Craftsmanship and hardware is more elaborate on the second floor than on the third. Several window aprons and doors on the third floor, including one in the apartment, display graffiti such as carved initials. One even shows evidence of what appears to have been a peephole.

The first floor of the Wood Building is divided into three businesses (see floor plan pg. 7.7). On the northeast side of the building is 1 South Frederick Street. This location is approximately seventy feet long and twenty feet wide, and still houses a tavern. Its primary corner entrance consists of a narrow double door with brass hardware, which appears to be original. The interior of the pub has a decorative pressed tin ceiling that also seems to be original, and a vinyl floor covering. The bar, although probably original, has been painted brown so the wood grain is no longer visible. The raised panels on the front of the bar, however, are evident. These panels are adorned with carved flowers and bracketed by pilasters. There is an extension to the bar that blends with the other section, although it is not as ornate. There are two bathrooms at the rear of the room, and a door on the back, or west, wall leads into the foyer entrance of 605 Independence Street where the previously discussed staircase leads to the second and third floors.

The current owner uses 3 South Frederick Street as his workshop. This room is approximately 70 feet long and 15 feet wide. The original framing, unusual because its square bracing was done strictly with two-by-fours, is visible along the north interior wall. The owner also uses the back portion of the first story, which is the 607 Independence Street business address, for similar purposes. It runs the full width of the building directly behind 1 and 3 South Frederick Street. The basement, which consists of a dirt floor and sandstone walls, is accessible through a door in this location.

Conclusion:

The Wood Building retains a high degree of exterior and interior integrity. Almost all exterior architectural elements are intact, despite the fact that the chimneys and parapet were repaired in the late 1980s. All window sash are original behind aluminum storm windows. Glass has only been replaced when absolutely necessary. A new rear porch was constructed in 1984 and the roof was replaced in 1995, following the design and construction techniques of the original as closely as possible. For example, many boards from the original porch were saved and used in the new porch. Even after a car accident severely damaged the front entrance at the 1 South Frederick Street address in 1999,⁴ the owner had the building carefully repaired by salvaging as many of the original materials as possible rather than replacing them with entirely new ones.⁵ Although sections of both the second and the third floors have been converted into apartments, original stairways still exist, and most walls, flooring, baseboards, closets, doors (including room numbers and other hardware), window aprons, moldings, and trim within the interior of the building are original. Furthermore, original graffiti, which consists of names and initials that were carved into walls, staircase balustrades, window aprons, and into the backs of doors, has never been removed. Because nearly all of its exterior and interior architectural features have been preserved, the Wood Building retains integrity.

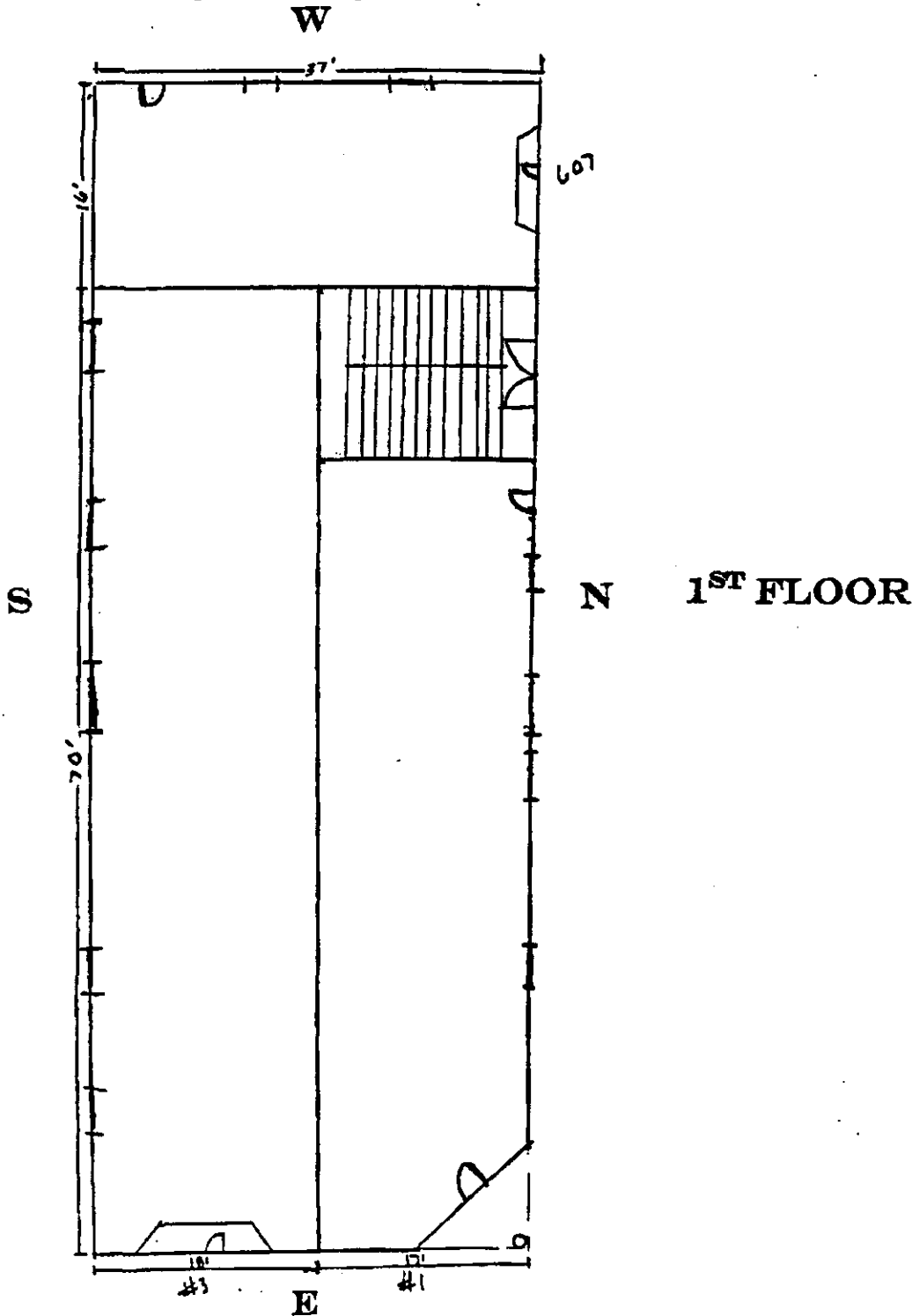
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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

First Floor Plan [Not to scale]:



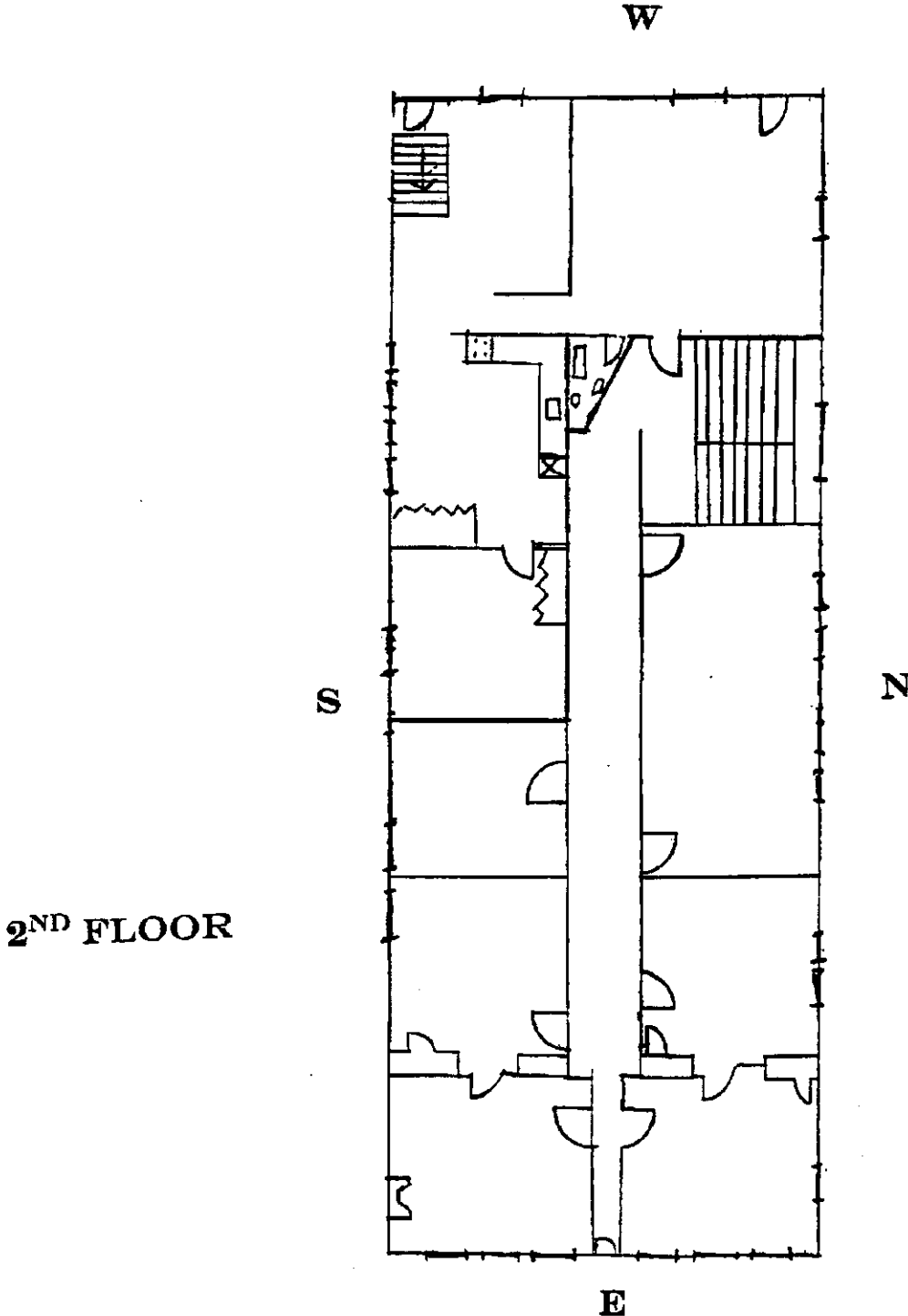
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Wood Building (Preferred)
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Second Floor Plan [Not to scale]:



2ND FLOOR

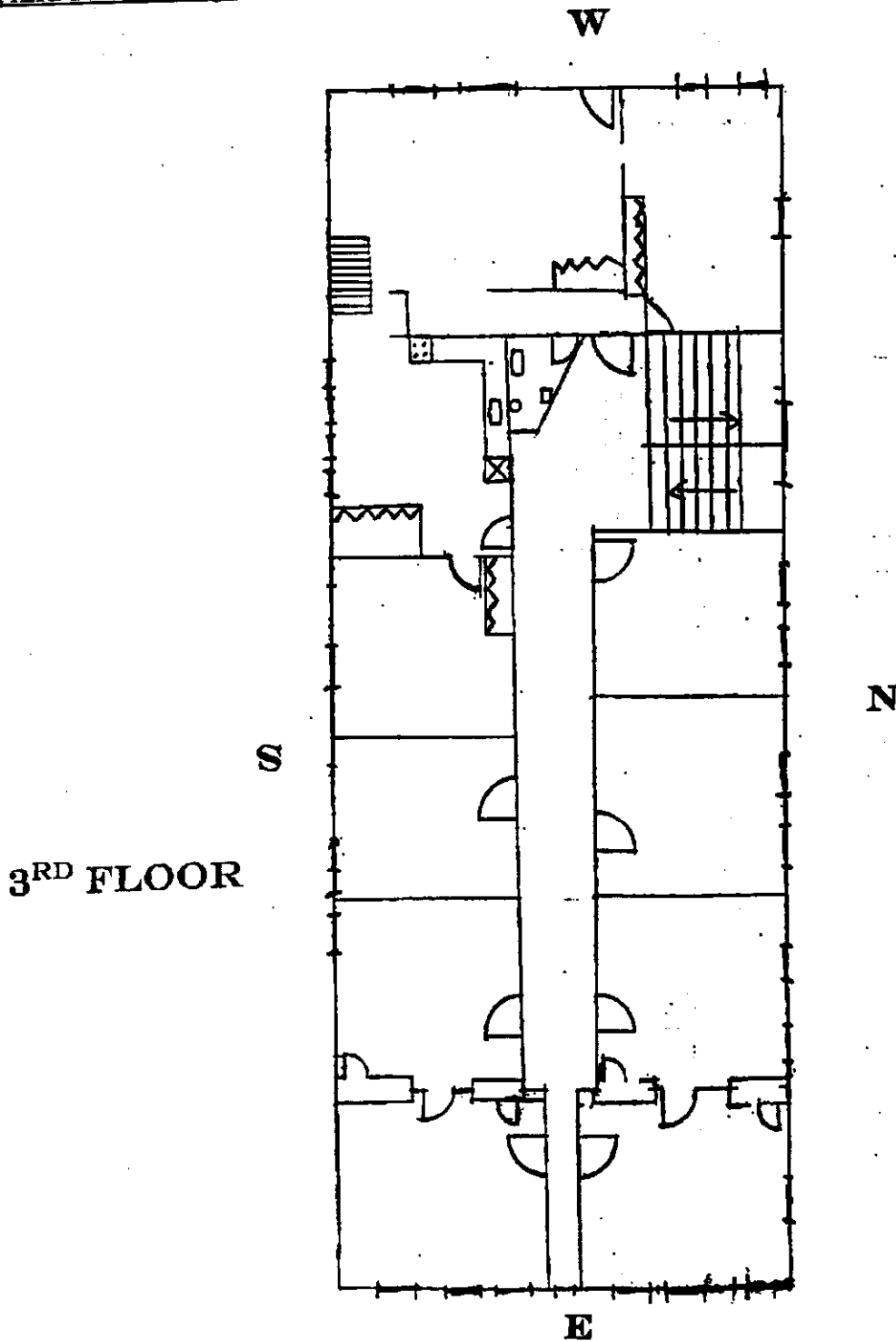
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Wood Building (Preferred)
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Third Floor Plan [Not to scale]:



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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Summary:

Built circa 1908-1910, the Wood Building (Preferred) in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and is locally significant in the areas of Commerce and Social History for its role in the development of Cape Girardeau. Constructed in an era when many rooming houses and hotels were built over taverns, the Wood Building is representative of the historic context "19th and Early 20th Century Commercial Buildings, ca. 1850-1950" in the MPS *Historical and Architectural Resources of Cape Girardeau, Missouri*. The city's oldest extant tavern, the Wood Building meets the registration requirements of the commercial buildings property type and has been described as the most notable surviving example of a neighborhood commercial building in Cape Girardeau.⁶ Historically, the first floor housed both legitimate and illicit businesses including numerous pubs, while the second and third story rooms were rented to prostitutes as well as more traditional boarders. The building upholds the tradition of the neighborhood tavern to this day. The period of significance begins in 1910 when the Wood Building was first leased by a brewing company and ends in 1953 at the arbitrary 50-year-old cut-off date for National Register listing.

Building History:

William L. Wood, a contractor and farmer, and his wife Mary moved from Perryville, Missouri, to Cape Girardeau circa 1895 with their two young sons, William Jr., age 5, and Charles, age 9.⁷ According to the legal abstract, Wood purchased the eastern 127 feet of Lot 25 in Range B in the city of Cape Girardeau in October of 1901. In November of 1906, Wood and his wife used the property as collateral to secure a \$3,000 loan, and by 1908 the Sanborn Insurance Map depicts the building at the corner of Independence and Frederick Streets as "unfinished."⁸ The exterior and first floor of the building were completed by July of 1910, when the Rudolph Stecher Brewing Company of Murphysboro, Illinois, rented the entire first floor.⁹ The lease clearly indicates that the building is three stories; however, because the Brewing Company only leased the first level, it is unclear whether or not the interiors of the upper two floors had been completed. What is known is that four months after leasing the first story, William and Mary Wood used the property as a guarantee for a \$1,000 loan, which perhaps indicates that a lack of funds had delayed completion of the building for two years.¹⁰ Finding a tenant might have allowed the Woods to secure a loan so that any unfinished work could be concluded. Land tax records indicate that the valuation for this lot increased from \$1,500 in 1910 to \$2,000 in 1911 - another clue that something had happened on the property.¹¹ In 1918 a loan for \$3,113.20 was obtained, again with the property as collateral. No other transactions occurred until 1943, when, because his wife Mary had already passed away, William Wood transferred the property to his son William Jr. When William Jr. died in 1948, the deed reverted to his brother Charles, and when Charles died in 1962 it was transferred to Charles' widow, Hazel Wood.¹² The current owner, John Boos, bought the property from Hazel Wood and her daughter, Dorothy Hughes in 1979. During its long history, 1 South Frederick Street has nearly always been a saloon, with only temporary closures along the way, while 3 South Frederick and 607 Independence have housed such diverse businesses as The Creamery, The Central Furniture Company, and Kos Potato Chip Company.¹³ The second and third floors were known at one time as the Central Hotel. Both floors served as a boarding house and hotel, as well as a front for a house of ill-repute.

With the arrival of the Houck and San Francisco railroad systems in the late 19th century, Cape Girardeau's sluggish economy prospered and numerous commercial ventures were formed.¹⁴ As had happened in countless

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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

other communities of that period, including Sedalia, Missouri, saloons and "houses of ill fame" were woven into the social and commercial fabric of Cape Girardeau by the early years of the 20th century, and the Wood Building - with its infamous reputation¹⁵ - is especially noteworthy both because it retains a high level of architectural integrity and because its history demonstrates tensions that existed between various groups, including area residents, madams, the local constabulary, attorneys, judges and other local officials, and organizations such as the Citizens Committee. Moreover, because it operated within one hundred yards of a police station and city hall, and because cases involving activities at the Wood Building were most frequently dismissed when they entered the court system, its history suggests a probable pattern of official collusion and corruption. At the center of many controversies, the Wood Building is associated not only with local attitudes toward prostitution, alcohol, and other social vices, but is a reflection of state and national trends as well.

Social and Commercial Context:

An indication that something was amiss in Cape Girardeau, and at the Wood Building, came in early May of 1913. At this time the local grand jury was instructed to investigate violations of various statutes, including the operation of bawdy houses and cases of white slavery.¹⁶ One week later, a "Citizens Committee" opposed the renewal of the liquor license for the tavern in the Wood Building. In what was called "one of the most keenly fought cases heard by the county court in a long time," the committee did not impugn the character of the bar's owner or the general conduct of the saloon, but rather condemned the building and its occupants.¹⁷ Attempts to prove that the Wood Building was "an immoral resort," and that it had been "a constant menace to the citizens," failed, however, and a new license was granted.¹⁸ Yet the controversies relating to the Wood Building were just beginning.

Mary Wood received her first known indictment for "keeping a bawdy house" in May of 1913. The case dragged on for an entire year, but the charges were dismissed on the day her trial was to begin when the prosecuting attorney decided not to pursue the case.¹⁹

She was arrested for the second time a year later, in May of 1914, when the City of Cape Girardeau charged her with running a brothel. This time she was tried in local police court, found guilty, and fined \$100. However, she appealed her case to the Cape Girardeau Court of Common Pleas, and then to the Cape Girardeau County Circuit Court.²⁰ After numerous continuances and other delays, the Wood case was finally heard.²¹ During testimony, a Miss Eva Sewell "boasted of her bad life and her present condition of being kept by a man."²² The case was eventually sent to the St. Louis Court of Appeals.²³ This entire scenario played out over the course of six years, and in July of 1920 Mary Wood paid her fine. Meanwhile, she was indicted again by the State of Missouri in April of 1917.

Although indicted in April, Mrs. Wood was not actually arrested until that August.²⁴ Again the trial dragged on, remaining unsettled until May of 1918 when the charges were dismissed at her cost.²⁵ The judge who presided at the hearing stated that he thought Mary's health, which had been the cause of another set of continuances, would drastically improve now that her case was finally over.²⁶

Perhaps the most intriguing legal action occurred in August of 1919, when Mrs. Wood was again arrested - along with a man named Charles Stebbins, who was accused of operating a house of ill repute over the Metropolitan Restaurant on Main Street - in an attempt by local officials to "clean up Cape Girardeau."²⁷ Mr. Stebbins was charged with a misdemeanor, whereas Mrs. Wood was charged with a felony because the Central Hotel was located within a hundred feet of a public building - meaning the police station and city hall.²⁸

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Interestingly, there are no records of this case in the Cape Girardeau County court proceedings; however, the case was highly publicized in the *Southeast Missourian* newspaper.²⁹ Thus, in addition to the Citizens' Committee, the Wood family had to deal with warrants that were issued by the Law Enforcement League, an organization which had "special cervice [*sic*] men make a careful inspection of liquor and moral conditions in Cape Girardeau."³⁰

These men, according to affidavits in possession of the League, contracted to buy the rooming house from ... Mrs. Wood. The contract... was written out, containing a complete description of the business, the profits derived and much other information. Mrs. Wood... signed a contract for the sale of her house, it is claimed, and after giving full particulars, naming certain girls and referring to the business of gambling, impressed upon the purchaser that he need not fear any interference in the conduct of such a place and then a most remarkable statement was made regarding the conduct of her place.³¹

The newspaper also reminded readers that Mrs. Wood had been on trial previously for similar charges, and that one delay after another had occurred "for reasons that only lawyers and court officials could understand." It was said that even the local sheriff, who had attempted to keep witnesses at the ready throughout the ordeal, had finally become discouraged and given up.³²

Apparently, all the publicity had been bad for business; Mrs. Wood told a *Southeast Missourian* reporter that, although the hotel had 20 rooms, demand for them had dropped off dramatically.³³ Moreover, just a few days after her arrest, Mrs. Wood decided to move. She leased the rooming house to a resident named Mae Corner, also known as Cleo Corner, who claimed that she would "conduct the place in a respectable manner" and that she would "not accept improper characters;" she was to run a rooming house for respectable working girls.³⁴ The case took an even more fascinating turn when a want ad published in the Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian* the week before the Wood Building was leased to Ms. Corner reported the disappearance of the register from the hotel. It had, apparently, mysteriously vanished just days after Mrs. Wood spoke with the Law Enforcement League's "inspector."³⁵

Some of those involved were so fervent in their beliefs that at one point, a fistfight erupted in the office of the justice of the peace. Before either the Stebbins or Wood cases could go to trial, the defense attorney for both cases, Harry Alexander, and prosecuting attorney C. N. Mozley actually came to blows in Justice of the Peace C. M. Gilbert's office.³⁶ The Stebbins case was finally heard on August 26, 1919, and on August 27, 1919 he was found not guilty.³⁷ Ironically, when court was adjourned for a short recess, many of those in attendance went across the street to the Central Bar, which was located in the Wood Building.³⁸ Mrs. Wood went to trial on August 28, 1919, and, not surprisingly, on August 29 was found not guilty by Judge Gilbert.³⁹ Over the course of nearly seven years, Mrs. Wood was arrested and tried four times, appeared before several different judges, and was found guilty only once.

By September of 1919, a mere month after claiming that she would be running a respectable rooming house, Ms. Corner was indicted by the State of Missouri for operating a bawdy house within a hundred feet of City Hall.⁴⁰ Her trial began in Cape Girardeau Police Court in October of 1919, and her attorney was, once again, Harry Alexander.⁴¹ Two young men ostensibly working for the Law Enforcement League testified that they had gone to the hotel, asked if any girls were available, and when told they would have to wait determined that "business" was probably not bad. In April 1920, after several requests for changes of venue and continuances, Ms. Corner pleaded guilty and was fined \$200; a \$150 "stay of execution" was granted "during good behavior."⁴²

Prostitution was not the only controversy that involved the Wood Building, for it was revealed during

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Ms. Comer's trial that minors had been allowed to purchase liquor at the Central Bar.⁴³

The saloon in the Wood Building had been an issue for local reform groups like the Citizens Committee as early as 1913, and it continued to be an issue throughout the debate over Prohibition. When Prohibition was enacted in July of 1919, most saloonkeepers in Cape Girardeau stopped serving beer even though the legislation did not take effect until January of 1920.⁴⁴ The owner of the Central Bar, however, who leased the location from Mr. and Mrs. Wood, continued to dispense beer, and had, by October of 1919, earned a hefty \$15,000.00.⁴⁵ When the bar closed its doors temporarily on October 29, 1919, beverages with higher than one half of one percent alcohol content could no longer be purchased in Cape Girardeau.⁴⁶ The Central Bar reopened as a "soft drink place" four days later, but by 1921 it was clearly not what it appeared to be.⁴⁷ On August 26 of 1921, a federal prohibition officer named H. B. King confiscated 24 cases of bitters and eight gallons of wine from the Central Bar. After carrying the bottles to the front door and tossing them into the street, agent King is said to have smashed any unbroken containers with his tomahawk.⁴⁸

The controversies surrounding the Wood Building were rooted in the social reform movements of the Progressive Era that were taking place throughout Missouri and the rest of the nation during the first two decades of the 20th century.⁴⁹ Industrialization, urban expansion, immigration, an unpredictable economy, and business monopolies are just a few of the trends that prompted Missourians, as well as other Americans, to expect government agencies to intervene to enhance their economic and physical well-being.⁵⁰

Conclusion:

Neighborhood taverns played a prominent role in the development of American cities.⁵¹ The efforts of anti-alcohol activists notwithstanding, "saloons and taverns were common places of recreation and relaxation in turn-of-the-century Missouri, especially in larger towns and cities and in communities [such as Cape Girardeau] that featured large German immigrant populations."⁵² They "gave boisterous welcome to every male adult, regardless of his private conduct, his clothes, his manners, his previous record, or his ultimate destination."⁵³ Prior to 1920, taverns left virtually no aspect of urban life unaffected.⁵⁴ "Hardly an issue of a big city newspaper hit the street without some mention of a barroom, perhaps as the scene of a crime or a political meeting or as the subject of a human interest feature," and Cape Girardeau was no different.⁵⁵ Many saloons - especially in areas such as Cape Girardeau's German Haarg district located not far from the Wood Building - were within easy reach of those who called the area home.⁵⁶ Furthermore, bars wielded wide economic influence in Cape Girardeau. In early 1917, many local saloon keepers banded together and partnered with local officials. They agreed to a \$300 per year increase in the cost of their liquor licenses if the city of Cape Girardeau would help reduce the number of taverns, and their plan worked.⁵⁷ Within just a few years the number of taverns in town had been reduced from 26 to 14.⁵⁸

Bars like the one in the Wood Building serve not only as commercial drinking establishments but gathering places for residents who live nearby, and there is ample evidence that - whether it has been known as the Central Bar, the Comer Pub, or Mac's Tavern - this building on the southwest corner of Frederick and Independence Streets has served as a focal point for the community throughout its period of significance.⁵⁹ Its integrity remains intact, and it was described by Thompson and Associates Preservation Planners of Nashville, Tennessee as the best extant example of a neighborhood commercial building in Cape Girardeau.⁶⁰ Locally significant under Criterion A for its relationship to the commercial and social history of the city, it illustrates trends that were taking place on the state and national level as well. The Wood Building's longevity demonstrates its importance as an enduring neighborhood institution.

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- Thomason & Associates. *Cape Girardeau Historic Preservation Plan, Cape Girardeau, Missouri*. Cape Girardeau, MO: City of Cape Girardeau, June, 1999.
- _____. *Intensive Survey of the Downtown Commercial and Residential Area of Cape Girardeau, Missouri*. Cape Girardeau, MO: City of Cape Girardeau, September, 2000.
- "Wm. L. Wood Dies; Rites on Friday." Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO, Jan. 14, 1948, Pg. 8, Col. 3.

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Wood Building
Cape Girardeau County, MO

"Wm. L. Wood of Cape Girardeau Dies." Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO, Dec. 3, 1945, Pg. 8, Col. 4.

"Wood and Stebbins Granted Change from Schultz's Court." Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO, Aug. 20, 1919, Pg. 3, Col 4.

"Wood and Stebbins Trials Wednesday." Cape Girardeau *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, MO, Aug. 18, 1919, Pg. 3, Col 1.

Wood, William L. Common Pleas Probate Files of Cape Girardeau County, February, 1948. Available at the Cape Girardeau County Archive Center, Jackson, MO.

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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Verbal Boundary Description:

The eastern 127 feet of Lot Number 25 in Range B in the city and county of Cape Girardeau as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of the aforementioned lot 25, which is formed by the intersection of Independence and Frederick Streets, run west along Independence Street for 127 feet, and then run south - parallel with Frederick Street - for 112 feet to the southern boundary of said lot 25. Next run east along the southern boundary of lot 25 in Range B- parallel with Independence Street - for 127 feet to Frederick Street. Finally, run north along Frederick Street 112 feet to return to the beginning point. (From *Abstract of Title 1795 - 1911 Made for William Wood, Cape Girardeau, MO*, Prepared by Sam Vandivort, 1911). The verbal boundary description incorporates all of the Wood Building itself, and the remainder of the surrounding lot on which it was built.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries correspond to the deed description of the property, and encompasses the area that is historically associated with the building.

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Wood Building (Preferred)
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Photographs:

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Wood Building

Southwest corner at the intersection of Frederick and Independence Streets.

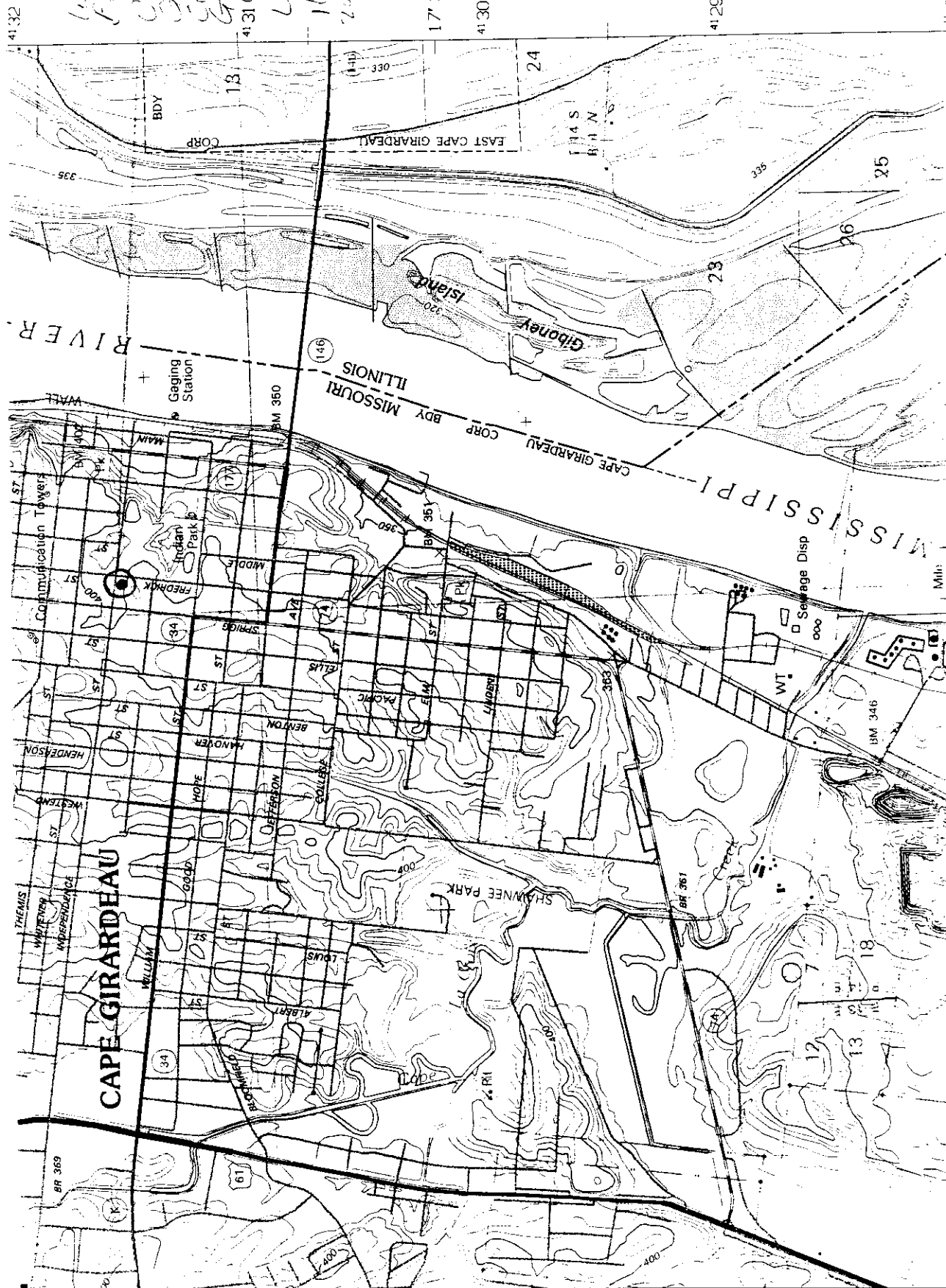
Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, MO

Debbie Bibb, Photographer

March, 2002

Debbie Bibb and Cathy Grove, Southeast Missouri State University, c/o Dr. Steven Hoffman, 311 T
Carnahan Hall, Mail Stop 2960, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

- # 1 East (Frederick Street) elevation, camera facing west.
- # 2 East (Frederick Street) and north (Independence Street) elevations, camera facing southwest.
- # 3 North (Independence Street) elevation, camera facing south.
- # 4 South elevation bordering adjoining yard, camera facing northeast.
- # 5 West (alleyway) elevation, camera facing northeast.
- # 6 West (alleyway) elevation, camera facing east.



LONG DIST
CAPE GIRARDEAU
STATE
GEN CO. MISSOURI
UTM REF
110/276130
4121580

4132

4131

17' 30"

4130

4129

BDY

CORP

EAST CAPE GIRARDEAU

114 S
R I N

RIVER

BDY MISSOURI ILLINOIS

BM 360

CORP

CAPE GIRARDEAU

MISSISSIPPI

Sewage Disp

000

Mile

BM 346

BR 361

BR 361

CAPE GIRARDEAU

BR 369

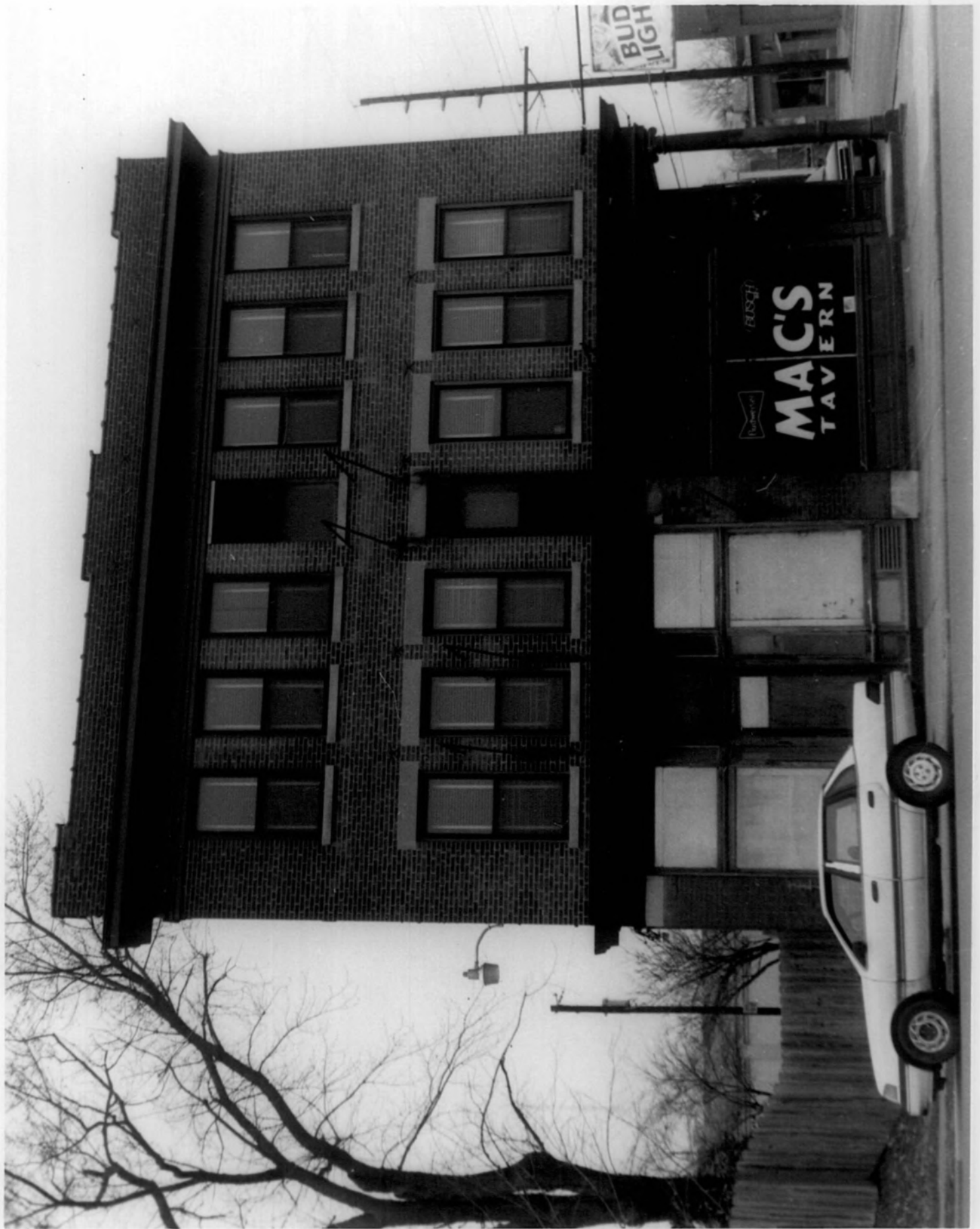
34

18

13

12

11



BUD LIGHT

RUSCH

MAC'S TAVERN





