

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 A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building

other name/site number A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company Building

2. Location

street & town 1015 East 8th Street N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64106

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

December 15, 2006
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:

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:) _____

A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

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		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 Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/warehouse

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: two-part commercial block

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Limestone
walls	BRICK
roof	SYNTHETICS
other	TERRA COTTA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

8. Description

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.)

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1908-1956

Significant Dates

1911

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hucke & Sexton (contractor/builder)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

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:

ABC Business Records Center, Kansas City, Missouri

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/6/4/2/3/7 4/3/2/9/4/8/6
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

All of the west 69.75 feet of Lots 5 through 11, inclusive, and the west 69.75 feet of the south 3 feet of Lot 12, all of the above property being in Block 1, Peery Place addition, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Property Tax No. N/A

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This nomination includes the parcel of land historically associated with the resource.

☐ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kerry Davis, Architectural Historian
organization Sally Schwenk Associates, Inc. date July 2006
street & number 112 West Ninth Street, Suite 415 telephone 816-221-2672
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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

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

Photographs: Representative **black-and-white photographs** of the property.

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

Property Owner

name/title ABC Storage and Van Condos, LLC
street & number C/O 800 Prospect Avenue telephone 816-483-7005
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64124

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

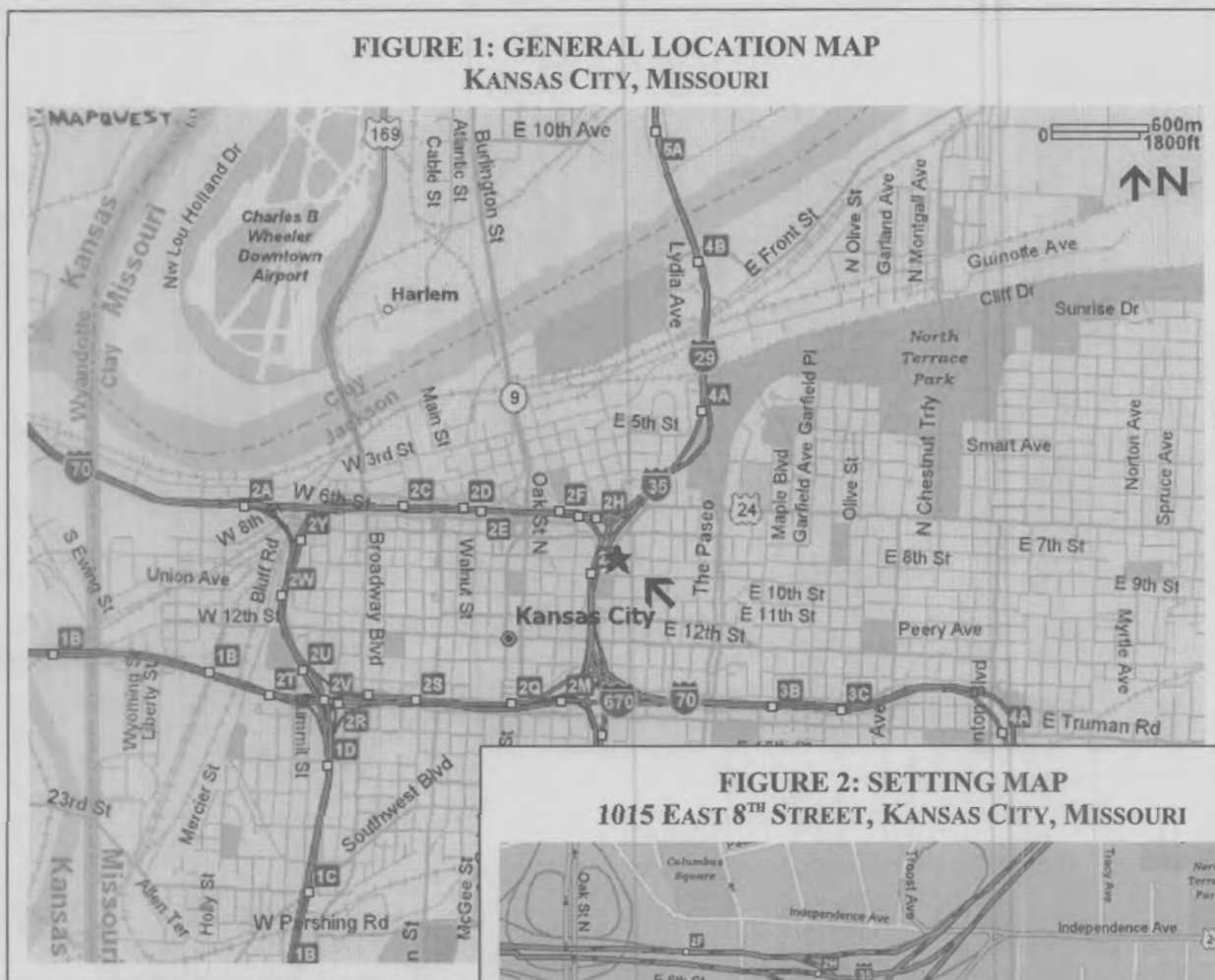
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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

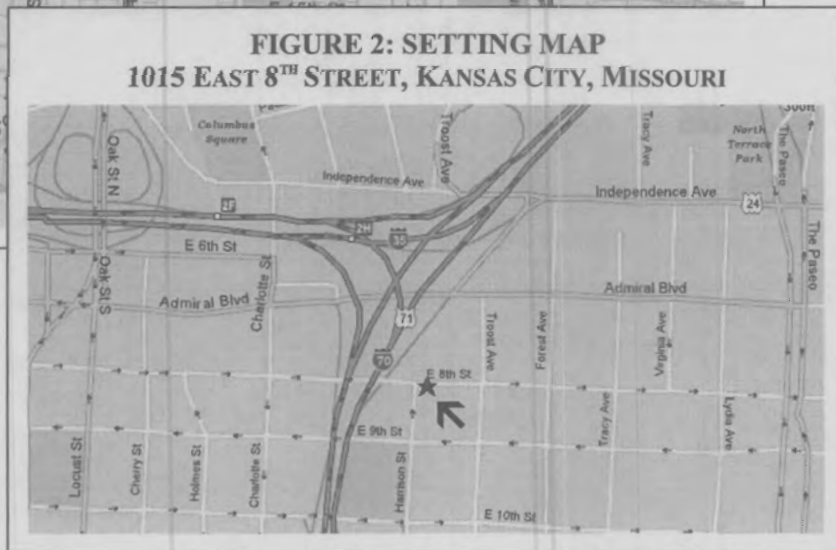
SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building at 1015 East 8th Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri is a four-story fireproof commercial warehouse building constructed of reinforced concrete with brick cladding. Built in 1908, with a 1911 addition, the 40,300-square-foot building is located at the east edge of the downtown Kansas City central business district and is two blocks south of Independence Avenue. Sparse commercial and light industrial resources interspersed with vacant lots now characterize what was historically a mixed residential and commercial area.

**FIGURE 1: GENERAL LOCATION MAP
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**



**FIGURE 2: SETTING MAP
1015 EAST 8TH STREET, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**



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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is an excellent example of the commercial warehouse functional property type. Characteristic of its functional building type, the fenestration is minimal with wide spans of blank brick wall between window penetrations. Its reinforced concrete structure and brick cladding represent state-of-the-art fireproof construction for its period of construction. Loading dock bays at the rear of the west (side) elevation convey the freight loading function of the internal spaces within the rear section of the first story. The interior spatial arrangement features large floor plates dedicated to a variety of specific commercial storage functions, including large open spaces, smaller sub-divided storage areas, fur storage rooms, and valuables vaults, as well as the front lobby and sales office spaces.

While the heavy massing and minimal fenestration reflect the building's historic commercial storage function, the brick cladding, slightly arched parapet, and decorative embellishments on the north (primary) façade and along select areas of the east and west (side) elevations reference popular functional design and understated commercial architectural styling. The north (primary) façade is visually divided into a two-part commercial block arrangement, with a continuous band of terra cotta delineating the street-level space from the upper stories. The street-level façade clearly reflects the reception and administrative functions of the internal spaces within. Brick columns with cut stone capitals distinguish the deeply recessed pedestrian entrance flanked by large plate glass display windows. The restrained decorative treatment is comprised of red vitrified brick cladding with contrasting dark plum-colored vitrified brick, terra cotta, and cut stone accents expressing a geometric motif.

Other than the early 1950s removal of most of the upper floors' interior storage room partition walls, the remaining alterations to the original building's appearance are minimal and most are reversible. These alterations include the replacement of original vehicular doors; the installation of wood frame and plywood infill in the vehicular bays in the rear elevation; the painting of the first-story brick and the covering of the transoms on the north (primary) façade; and the covering of the original lobby and office finishes with paneling and suspended ceiling tiles. These changes do not affect the building's ability to communicate its historic associations or its ability to convey its functional property type. Beyond these alterations, the most important integrity issue affecting the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is some loss of its historic setting. This is offset by the building's retention of a high percentage of its original features and materials dating from its period of significance.

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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

ELABORATION

SETTING

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is located at 1015 East 8th Street on the east edge of downtown Kansas City, Missouri in an area formerly characterized by late nineteenth and early twentieth century mixed residential and commercial resources. Most of the historic residential resources in the immediate vicinity are no longer extant. The East 8th Street overpass, which crosses above Interstate 70, is one block to the west. The lots immediately adjacent to the east, west, and south are vacant; the vacant concrete pad to the south (rear) of the building is the foundation of the former stable/auto garage historically associated with the building. The Romanesque Revival style Calvary Baptist Church and a 1911 Masonic Temple are located directly to the southwest and face onto East 9th Street. Across East 8th Street to the north is a modern concrete commercial business building. At this location, East 8th Street is a lightly traveled one-way (east bound) three-lane paved street with shallow concrete curbs and sidewalks with no easement strip. The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is sited very close to the street at the edge of the sidewalk.

EXTERIOR

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is a four-story reinforced concrete building. Red brick cladding laid in a common bond (five stretchers for every header row) and stone foundation walls conceal the concrete structure, which is revealed only on the south (rear) elevation. Common brick with plain mortar joints clad most of the building and fill the space between the concrete structural grid. Decorative vitrified brick with deeply raked mortar joints clads the north (primary) façade and select areas of the side elevations (Photograph Numbers 1 and 4). The rectangular footprint, which measures 69 feet by 117 feet, is three bays wide and five bays deep, defined by fenestration. The original 1908 portion of the building occupies the north (front) half of the lot and measures 69 feet by 67 feet; the 1911 full-height, 69-by-50-foot rear addition occupies the south (rear) half of the lot.

North (Primary) Façade

The symmetrically arranged primary façade faces north and is visually divided into a two-part commercial block arrangement, with a cut-stone water table defining the base of the street-level façade, and a continuous band of terra cotta dividing the street-level façade from the three upper stories (Photograph Numbers 1 and 4). A conventional storefront configuration with a recessed center bay entrance flanked by large wood-framed plate glass display windows occupies the central section of the primary façade wall. The brick cladding projects forward a single header width across the width of the storefront, subtly accentuating the central section. Brick columns with cut stone capitals featuring a geometric diamond motif distinguish the entrance, which is deeply recessed behind the front wall and accessed by a set of

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concrete steps. The historic double-leaf, wood frame, full-light entrance doors with full-height sidelights occupy the entrance bay. Large plate glass display windows form the sidewalls of the entrance recess. Iron security bars cover each of the glazed openings in the first story. The original transom windows are intact above each display window and the entrance bay; they are currently covered by plywood. Single window openings covered with wood louvered shutters occupy the four outermost bays of the first story.

A band of terra cotta molding spans the top of the storefront bays. Above this is a terra cotta sign panel with letters in relief that read "A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN CO." Two diamonds formed by projecting brick flank each side of the sign panel. A continuous band of terra cotta molding extends the full width of the first story, wrapping the corners and visually delineating the first story from the upper stories (Photograph Numbers 1 through 3).

Three vertical columns of single window openings and a slightly arched parapet wall characterize the three upper stories of the primary façade. All of the upper-story window openings have flat steel lintels, cut stone sills, and contain the original two-over-two light metal sashes with wire glass glazing. Projecting dark plum-colored vitrified brick with deeply raked mortar joints surrounds the window openings, further accentuating the vertical arrangement. This use of contrasting brick forms full-height bands that vertically flank the windows of the two outermost bays; horizontal bands connect with the vertical bands to form a grid motif. The contrasting brick treatment also forms two continuous corbel courses across the top of the lintels of the fourth-story windows to create a cornice. The center section of the cornice between the outermost bays incorporates six terra cotta diamond motif pendants. Above the cornice, the parapet wall features the dark plum-colored contrasting brick laid in a Flemish bond, forming a crosshatched diamond pattern. White terra cotta molding caps the parapet wall.

Secondary Elevations

The two building sections of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building — the original 1908 north (front) section and the 1911 south (rear) addition — are clearly discernable when viewing the side elevations (Photograph Numbers 1, 4, and 5). The decorative red vitrified brick with deeply raked mortar joints that clads the north (primary) façade wall forms pilasters and cornice bands with a faux bracket effect that contrasts with the common brick cladding of the south (rear) addition. These elements frame the two building sections, delineating and unifying them with a common decorative treatment. Terra cotta coping tiles manufactured by the W. S. Dickey Company of Kansas City cap the parapet walls of the secondary elevations.

The west (side) elevation, which faces traffic arriving from downtown Kansas City, features significantly more embellishment than the east (side) elevation (Photograph Numbers 1 and 4). Utilizing the same devices incorporated on the north (primary) façade, the decoration on the west (side) elevation is generally restricted to the northernmost bay, where the decorative treatment of the primary façade wraps around to

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the west (side) elevation's first bay, as well as to the center bay, which is under the freight elevator tower. At these locations, contrasting dark plum-colored brick laid in crosshatched diamond pattern and white terra cotta molding embellish the cornice level, and projecting red vitrified brick forms rectangular borders and pilasters that enframe the vertical column of windows.

The fenestration of these elevations forms regular patterns, but varies between the building's original 1908 north (front) section and the 1911 south (rear) addition. Penetrating the east and west walls of the original north (front) section are groupings of four to seven very small, square openings with fixed-sash windows and header brick sills. The east and west walls of the 1911 south (rear) addition feature single window openings with sashes that match those on the primary façade. Single window openings that contain one-by-one light fixed metal sashes with wire glass glazing occupy the northernmost and center bays, behind which are the stairwell and freight elevator shafts, respectively. The original vehicular freight loading bays occupy the second and third bays from the south (rear) end of the first story of the west elevation. The center freight bay contains a historic metal overhead door and has a raised concrete block dock that leads directly into the freight elevator shaft. The other freight bay contains non-original plywood infill and an aluminum overhead door that leads to an interior raised loading dock. Plywood infill occupies the south end bay of this elevation as well as the west end bays of the south (rear) elevation. The grid of the reinforced concrete structure, concealed on all other elevations, is visible at the south (rear) elevation (Photograph Number 6). Brick fills the spaces between the concrete grid on this elevation, which has no window penetrations.

INTERIOR

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building has four floors and a below-grade basement. The interior is largely devoted to storage spaces, but also includes lobby, office, receiving, and fur storage spaces as well as freight loading docks and mechanical rooms.

First Floor

Lobby and office spaces occupy the north end of the first floor, directly through the main entrance (Photograph Numbers 7 and 10). The lobby features fourteen-foot-high ceilings; plaster walls, ceilings, and columns; terrazzo floors; white marble baseboard trim; and decorative window trim molding. Currently, non-historic wall paneling and suspended ceiling tiles cover these historic finishes. A large vault door occupies a prominent place at the center of the rear lobby wall (Photograph Numbers 8 and 9). Adjacent to the west, a receiving window penetrates the back wall (Photograph Number 13). Enclosed in a stairwell at the northwest corner of the building are the original iron stairs.

A pair of sales offices is adjacent to the lobby to the east (Photograph Number 10). A half-height partition wall with glazing above separates the offices from one another. The south sales office features a large

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vault door in the center of the rear wall that leads to the fur storage rooms (Photograph Number 11). Above the vault door, a cast iron sign frieze with highly decorative egg-and-dart molding spans the width of the wall. The fur storage space in the vault is divided horizontally into two half-height rooms; a short internal stair allows access between the two spaces (Photograph Number 12).

Behind the public spaces of the lobby, sales offices, and entrance lobby to the fur storage vault, the interior treatment and materials are utilitarian and unfinished. On the first floor, functional storage and transport spaces include various sizes of storage rooms, furniture sales display areas, loading docks, transport corridors, and auto truck service spaces (Photograph Numbers 14 and 15). Each floor above the first floor has a similar open floor plate. Banks of smaller storage rooms defined and divided by hollow tile walls line the outer walls of the third and fourth floors (Photograph Numbers 17 and 19). Large iron doors allow access to these storage rooms. A freight elevator at the center of the west wall carried goods between floors (Photograph Number 20). At each floor, a load-bearing brick wall divides the original 1908 north (front) section of the building from the 1911 rear (south) addition. Throughout the building, sliding fire doors adjacent to the freight elevator allow access between these two sections of the building (Photograph Number 20). Mechanical rooms are in the basement.

The utilitarian spaces of the building have reinforced concrete floors and ceilings supported by large square concrete columns (without capitals) that support the concrete joists and beams of the floor and roof above (Photograph Numbers 16 and 18). Exposed common brick fills the space between the columns of the outside walls. Internal partition walls are hollow tile. The concrete floors are unfinished; the concrete columns and ceilings, as well as the brick and hollow tile walls are painted. The loading dock area features a brick paved floor and a raised concrete dock.

INTEGRITY

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building retains a high degree of integrity. The historic design of the building remains considerably intact and reflects the distinct attributes of an early twentieth century commercial warehouse building. The building's character-defining features include the large size and massing of the building; the simple rectangular plan and alignment with the street grid; fireproof construction; minimal fenestration; vehicular freight loading docks; restrained decorative treatments popular for functional commercial buildings at the time of construction; and the interior spatial arrangement that incorporates a variety of public and utilitarian spaces specific to the historic function of the building.

Changes to the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building have been minimal. The significant elements that define its historic function and convey its distinct architecture style remain unaltered. These features include the building's historic massing; exterior decorative elements; original metal sashes with wire glass

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glazing; interior arrangement of lobby, office, and various storage spaces; fireproof structure; and interior finishes. The removal of most of the original interior storage room partition walls occurred during the period of significance and reflects the development of both the commercial warehouse property type and the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company. Non-historic alterations include the replacement of original vehicular doors; the use of wood-frame and plywood infill in the vehicular bays in the south (rear) elevation; the painting of the first-story brick and the covering of the transoms on the north (primary) façade; and the covering of the original lobby and office finishes with paneling and suspended ceiling tiles. These alterations are minimal and most are reversible. As such, they do not affect the building's ability to communicate its era of construction and its historic associations or its ability to convey its functional property type.

Beyond these alterations, the most important integrity issue affecting the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is some loss of its historic setting. Changes brought by the proximity of a modern highway to the west of the building and some loss of the dense mixed residential and commercial context and urban density in the neighborhood have weakened the integrity of the setting. The impact of the partial loss of setting is offset by the property's high degree of integrity in the areas of location, design, workmanship, and materials, which together successfully convey the commercial warehouse's associations and feelings of its date of construction and period of significance, which define the historic character of the property.

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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building located at 1015 East 8th Street in Kansas City, Missouri, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of COMMERCE and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. Erected in 1908 at the east edge of downtown Kansas City, Missouri, this building is an excellent example of the early fireproof commercial warehouse functional property type.

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is significant in the area of Commerce for its associations with the establishment of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company's¹ moving and storage empire in Kansas City during the first decades of the twentieth century and the later founding of Allied Van Lines, as well as its role in the broader development of the moving and storage industry in Kansas City, Missouri. The resource is a tangible reflection of the rapid growth of the industry during the early years of the twentieth century, and its strategic location on the east edge of the Kansas City central business district, adjacent to the growing residential neighborhoods along Independence Avenue, represents a distinct shift away from fire-prone industrial and commercial areas. The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is significant in the area of Architecture for its associations with the commercial warehouse functional property type designed to provide specific storage services to the public. The plan incorporates lobby and office spaces integrated with a variety of functional utilitarian storage spaces. The building is significant in its early use of reinforced concrete for fireproof buildings. The brick cladding and restrained decorative brickwork, cut stone, and terra cotta embellishments illustrate popular early twentieth century interpretations of commercial architecture styles and the established practice of disguising the concrete structure beneath.

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and successfully conveys feelings of its period of construction and associations with commerce in Kansas City, Missouri. The most significant alterations consist of the removal of original interior partition walls, which reflects the company's diversification and expansion during the period of significance, and the covering of original interior finishes, which is reversible. The building's integrity of setting has been significantly compromised; the demolition of neighboring buildings has interrupted the building's direct connections with the once dense mixed residential and commercial neighborhood. To the west, the construction of the highway altered its relationship to Kansas City's central business district. These changes, however, have not substantially impacted the building's ability to convey its historic function and design as a commercial storage warehouse. The period of significance for the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building begins in 1908 with its construction and ends in 1956, the arbitrary fifty-year cut-off date for National Register eligibility established by the National Register program as a reasonable date from which to evaluate the significance of a property. It also acknowledges historic alterations to the building that reflect the historic growth and expansion of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company.

¹ Later the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company.

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ELABORATION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVING AND STORAGE INDUSTRY

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Development

The early history of the modern moving and storage industry in the United States is linked to the nationwide expansion of the railroad system during the late nineteenth century and a concurrently growing, increasingly mobile population. During the mid- to late nineteenth century, large numbers of Americans changed their place of residence. Moving outside one's local area required coordinating the packing and local delivery of their household furnishings and personal possessions to the railroad freight shipping facilities and, if needed, to transfer services. This type of move also required arranging for a drayman or warehouse firm to be present at the final destination to pick up the shipment at the freight yard, deliver it, and uncrate the goods. Those moving from one region to another often chose to have their goods handled by a warehouse firm that orchestrated each step of the process in the packing, shipping, and delivery of their goods from one region to another.

Initially, these businesses were generally small, family-owned local storage and transfer companies that typically located their operations within a reasonable vicinity of railroad freight stations. They managed the moving of goods within a limited geographic area using a horse-drawn wagon or van. For moves outside the immediate vicinity, they acted as the shipping agent, transferring goods to the railroad freight agent. Using their network of industry contacts, they established cooperative relationships with other warehousemen at distant destination points to simplify and streamline the shipment process.² As a result, extensive professional networks of warehouses for the moving and storage of household goods developed nationwide.³

Often, the originating company had business agreements with numerous other storage and moving companies, both regionally and nationwide, to arrange for reliable pickup and dependable delivery to a distant location. From these alliances, methods such as the "pool car" concept developed where several shipments headed for similar destinations were combined in a single rail car to accomplish advantageous full-load rates that added to the revenue of the storage company owners.⁴

The initial responsibility of the storage and transfer company was the packing of goods. Smaller items were packed in the home, often using discarded dry goods barrels and packing materials. The packers then

² American Moving and Storage Association, "America's Moving Industry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *American Moving and Storage Association* [article online] available at <http://www.promover.org/about/americasmovingindustry.htm>; Internet; accessed 18 July 2006.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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transferred these containers and furniture items to a warehouse where they maintained a supply of lumber for the construction of packing crates.⁵ Here they constructed individual crates for each piece of furniture and, along with the packed barrels, they then carted the customer's belongings to the railroad freight station to be loaded onto boxcars.⁶

In addition to packing and transfer services, the more established businesses also offered both seasonal and long-term storage of household goods and business records. Warehouse and storage companies specialized in and advertised the safe storage of furniture, pianos, and retail merchandise. In an effort to set themselves apart from common warehousing businesses, storage and transfer companies sometimes offered



services and special accommodations for the storage and care of fine valuables such as silver, artwork, and china. As the industry grew and competition increased, additional amenities included safety deposit boxes, heated and/or humidity controlled rooms, and the at-home pickup of woolens and furs in the late spring for summer storage. Insurance, bonded staff, and fireproof buildings were key marketing points.

The location of facilities providing packing and moving services depended on access to paved streets and roads on which to cart goods to and

from the rail lines and the customers' households. Additionally, the facilities required enough land for a stable to house draft horses and large wagons, as moving vans required two- to three-horse teams.⁷

Early to Mid-Twentieth Century Storage and Transfer Businesses

The improvement of automobile technology during the first decades of the twentieth century significantly influenced the moving and storage industry. During this period, vehicles grew in size, capacity, and reliability and a national system of roads began to develop.⁸ While the widespread use of automobiles among the general population did not occur until after World War I when technological advancement brought rimless wheels, automatic starters, and convenient access to fuel, the owners of storage and transfer businesses invested in this new technology early in its development. With the infrastructure

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Robert F. Karolevitz, *This was Trucking: A Pictorial History of the First Quarter Century of Commercial Motor Vehicles* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 24.

⁸ American Moving and Storage Association, "America's Moving Industry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," available at <http://www.promover.org/about/americasmovingindustry.htm>; Internet and Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself: 1900-1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 108.

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already in place for the care and maintenance of draft horses, including blacksmiths and stables, they were in a better position to provide fuel storage tanks and the ongoing maintenance required of auto vans. By 1920, storage and transfer businesses had generally phased out their horses, wagons, and stables and, with the purchase of trucks, expanded their regional moving capabilities, often serving a forty- to fifty-mile radius.⁹ Household goods could now be carried greater distances directly from the home office, and only long-distance moves required the crating and transfer of goods to the railroad yard. With more deliveries made by auto van, the problem of empty return trips, or what was known as "deadheading,"¹⁰ became a major issue for the moving and storage industry.¹¹

Concurrent with the rise of the automobile, the need for trade associations rose within the moving and storage industry. In response to the vast numbers of families and individuals moving from the East to the West and from rural areas to urban centers, the industry grew rapidly, profits increased, and the industry experienced a period of "overexpansion."¹² In an effort to standardize rates and practices, a movement toward the formation of furniture warehousemen's associations emerged and in 1920, the National Furniture Warehousemen's Association (NFWA) formed at Mackinac Island, Michigan.¹³ Among the critical services provided by the NFWA and one of its key actions was the organization in the mid-1920s of the Inter-City Removals Bureau, which assisted in coordination among moving and storage companies throughout the country to form cooperative return-load exchanges of freight to ensure more full return trips and resolve the issue of deadheading.¹⁴ As a result, during the mid- to late 1920s, the regional character of moving and storage companies changed with the establishment of national van lines providing coast-to-coast service. The organization of the Inter-City Removals Bureau and the founding of firms like Return Loads Service, Inc. initiated strong cooperative alliances that resulted in the formation of such industry giants as Allied Van Lines and United Van Lines.¹⁵

Founded in 1928, Allied Van Lines was established as a non-profit organization by members of the NFWA Inter-City Removals Bureau, which included chairman Oscar W. Thomas, the first president of Allied. The mission of the organization was to aid independent movers with the issue of deadheading and to help them expand their services to a greater area.¹⁶ Allied's role was to provide central dispatching services to

⁹ John Hess, *The Mobile Society: A History of the Moving & Storage Industry* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), 28.

¹⁰ American Moving and Storage Association, "America's Moving Industry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," available at <http://www.promover.org/about/americasmovingindustry.htm>; Internet.

¹¹ Hess, 18.

¹² Clarence Aspinwall, quoted in Hess, 22.

¹³ Hess, 41.

¹⁴ Hess, 21.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Allied Van Lines, Inc., "Allied Timeline," *Allied Van Lines* [article online] available at <http://us.allied.com/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=144>; Internet; accessed 07 July 2006.

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its members, or “agents.”¹⁷ By the following year, Allied had over 175 agents, had hauled more than 5,700 shipments, boasted revenues of almost \$850,000, and had member agents throughout the east, central, and southern regions of the United States.¹⁸ The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building in Kansas City was the early headquarters of Oscar W. Thomas, founding chairman and first president of Allied Van Lines.

During the Great Depression, the expense of operating moving vans across the country led to the emergence of carrier agencies, which used a model similar to the one already established by Allied Van Lines. Smaller, struggling local and regional firms competed to book business as agents of established van lines, thereby receiving commissions. Allied Van Lines expanded its operations to the West Coast during this period, and established van lines such as Mayflower and Greyhound Van Lines seized upon the idea, closed a number of company booking offices, and enlisted local moving and storage businesses nationwide as their company agents.¹⁹

World War II brought a halt to non-military automobile and truck production, rationing of critical materials such as rubber and fuel, and shortages of labor and equipment, all of which significantly impacted storage and transfer companies. During this period, pallet warehousing became widespread among moving and storage companies nationwide.²⁰ The shift to forklift and a pallet based storage system required the removal of internal partition walls within older warehouse and storage facilities. The design of new storage facilities began to incorporate only a single story for the efficient transport and storage of goods within the facility.

The post-war period brought a new era of rapid growth and mobility. The transfer and storage industry paralleled this growth and significantly benefited from the expansion and improvement of interstate highway systems.²¹ The great migration to the suburbs spurred further development of the industry and led to a decided shift in new warehouse investment into suburban communities.

THE MOVING AND STORAGE INDUSTRY IN KANSAS CITY

The development of railroad transportation in the western United States following the Civil War promoted the expansion of settlement and industrialization in the Middle West and established Kansas City as a hub of commercial and industrial trade in the national economy. An immediate consequence of the city's link

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ American Moving and Storage Association, “America’s Moving Industry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” available at <http://www.promover.org/about/americasmovingindustry.htm>; Internet.

²⁰ Hess, 34.

²¹ American Moving and Storage Association, “America’s Moving Industry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” available at <http://www.promover.org/about/americasmovingindustry.htm>; Internet.

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to national transportation and service corridors was local and regional commercial and industrial growth and a rapid surge in population. The city's population expanded tenfold between 1870 and 1910, reaching nearly 200,000 and causing substantial physical changes in the community. During this period, the city grew to include a total of twenty-four railroad and streetcar lines, which spanned twenty-five miles of paved city streets.²²

The location of railroad terminal facilities within the city determined the location of the newly developed factories, wholesale houses, and warehouses, which were sited close to the railroad facilities for the speed and ease with which to transport freight. Consequently, prior to 1910, commercial warehouse and transfer company buildings were predominantly located in the West Bottoms at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers; in the Crossroads area between 15th and 22nd Streets; in the central business district bounded by Broadway, Oak, 9th and 15th Streets; and in the Old Town freight district that ran parallel to the Missouri River between Broadway Avenue and McGee Street. Of the thirteen general storage and transfer companies operating in Kansas City in 1905, none were east of McGee Street or south of 21st Street.²³ Within the next two years, five more companies became established in the city, but the southern limit of their locations moved south only as far as 24th Street.²⁴

By the turn of the twentieth century, the direction of Kansas City's expansion was distinctly eastward and the physical location of new storage and warehouse companies reflected the residential market's geographic shift away from the neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown core. During this period, the real estate market responded to the expansion of streetcar and inter-urban lines on the east side of town with a surge in residential development along Independence Avenue and in new desirable subdivisions such as Pendleton Heights.²⁵ In the northeast section of the city, Independence Avenue became a well-traveled paved street with streetcar lines and dense commercial and residential development along it and the streets flanking it to the north and south. By 1900, nearby streetcar lines also ran east and west along East 5th, East 8th, and East 10th Streets, as well as north and south along Grand, Troost, and Brooklyn Avenues.²⁶ The location of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company's first warehouse facility followed this eastward trend with the 1908 construction of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building, also known as Warehouse "A," near the intersection of East 8th Street and Troost Avenue.

²² Theodore A. Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *K.C.: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), 57.

²³ Hoyer Directory Company, *1905 Hoyer's Kansas City Directory* (Kansas City, MO: Hoyer Directory Company, 1905), 1533.

²⁴ Hoyer Directory Company, *1907 Hoyer's Kansas City Directory* (Kansas City, MO: Hoyer Directory Company, 1907), 1805.

²⁵ Brown, 53.

²⁶ "Park, Boulevard, and Street Railway Map of Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas," Map (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company, 1900).

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At the same time, the establishment of suburban neighborhoods for the affluent along streetcar lines some twenty-five blocks south of the downtown in the late 1880s, the implementation of a parks and boulevard system in the 1890s, and the announcement of the anticipated construction of the Union Station in 1905 all stimulated commercial development south along Main Street. The location of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company's second warehouse facility followed this southward trend with the 1909 completion of their Warehouse "B" at 33rd and Main Streets. By 1910, of the at least nineteen general storage warehouses located in Kansas City, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company's warehouses occupied both the easternmost and southernmost locations.²⁷

As Kansas City's population grew and became increasingly mobile and prosperous, the storage and transfer industry expanded in response to the character of the customer base. The number of facilities offering specific services for the care and storage of valuables quadrupled between 1907 and 1910, growing from a single facility to four.²⁸ The character of the services and amenities being offered changed significantly during this short period, reflecting an increasingly affluent and discriminating market. Initially, the marketing of moving and transfer services focused primarily on providing storage of wholesale or retail merchandise and providing transfer services to the general public. By 1910, the variety of amenities specifically cited in advertisements included fireproof and rat-proof facilities; accommodations for furniture and piano storage; silver vaults; separate locked compartments; the employ of expert packers; estimates, insurance, and expertise in "family moving."²⁹

During the 1910s and 1920s, the development of the moving and storage industry in Kansas City reflected national trends of expansion and diversification. By 1920, the industry in Kansas City included twenty separate storage and transfer companies located throughout the city, several of which offered multiple warehouse locations.³⁰ The various companies further diversified during this period, promoting specializations in household goods, valuables, or expert packing and/or moving services.

²⁷ Gate City Directory Company, *1910 Kansas City Directory* (Kansas City, MO: Gate City Directory Company, 1910), 1977.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gate City Directory Company, *1920 Kansas City Missouri City Directory and Business Catalog* (Kansas City, MO: Gate City Directory Company, 1920), 2442.

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In addition to new companies joining the industry in Kansas City, established businesses expanded. During this period, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company not only constructed large additions to their two existing warehouses, they also constructed a third warehouse at Linwood and Prospect Avenues and changed their name to A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company, a calculated marketing tactic.

Kansas City moving companies fully transitioned to auto truck transport during the 1910s and 1920s. Advertisements often pictured their new vehicles and underscored long-distance services such as "Over Night Service to Des Moines."³¹ In 1930, twenty-two storage companies operated throughout Kansas City, some of which had multiple listings in the City Directory under various headings, including "Moving,"

"Moving - Household Goods," "Moving - Long Distance," "Moving, Packing, Storage and Shipping," "Storage," and "Storage - Household Goods."³² At this time, a new type of firm emerged — the moving company. The first of these, Bell Transfer of Kansas City, eschewed storage services and focused solely on packing, moving, and transfer services, offering long-distance capabilities utilizing large enclosed auto trucks.³³



INTERIOR OF VAULT

**A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse
Company Advertisement, c.1915**
*ABC Business Records Center,
Kansas City, MO*



AISLE OF VAULTS

**A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse
Company Advertisement, c.1915**
ABC Business Records Center,

³¹ Gate City Directory Company, *Polk's Kansas City (Missouri) Directory 1930* (Kansas City, MO: Gate City Directory Company, 1930), 128.

³² *Ibid.*, 3020-21.

³³ *Ibid.*

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During the Great Depression and through the World War II era, despite the economic conditions and shortages, the number of storage, moving, transfer, and warehouse companies in Kansas City did not decline significantly and the diversified listings of the previous decade remained constant. Regardless, during this period, fur storage became a new, heavily marketed service offered by two large warehouse companies — the U.S. Cold Storage Company, located at East 3rd Street and Grand Avenue,³⁴ and the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company, which formed a separate fur storage subsidiary, A-B-C Scientific Fur Depositories.³⁵ While the U.S. Cold Storage Company promoted itself as “The Largest Cold Fur Storage West of Chicago,” A.B.C. Scientific Fur Depositories’ marketing underscored their expanded services, including fur re-styling, repair, cleaning, and glazing, as well as their high level of insurance coverage.³⁶



After World War II, the moving and storage industry in Kansas City experienced the same growth trends that occurred nationwide. The industry continued to diversify as competition grew and, during the mid-twentieth century,

some companies expanded into furniture and appliance sales. The city limits continued to expand east and south as new suburban development accommodated a surge in population growth and a concurrent migration out of the older neighborhoods. By 1950, the total number of companies offering moving, transfer, and storage services increased to twenty-five, with locations as far east as the 4500 block of East Truman Road and as far south as 77th Street.³⁷ As demand grew and companies expanded, they invested in suburban locations where they constructed large one-story facilities that efficiently accommodated pallet storage. Although some storage companies remained in the downtown and midtown areas of Kansas City, they shifted their focus on business records storage; the vast majority of household goods storage and moving facilities moved their facilities to outlying communities.

³⁴ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, this building is also known as the Kansas City Cold Storage Company Building.

³⁵ Gate City Directory Company, *Gate City Directory Co.'s Kansas City (Missouri) City Directory 1940* (Kansas City, MO: Gate City Directory Company, 1940), 50.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Kansas City (Missouri) Directory 1950-51* (Kansas City, MO: R.L. Polk & Company, 1951), 1558.

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A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY

Founded in February 1908, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company had a capitalization of \$50,000 divided into shares held by lawyer C. C. French, building contractor Samuel E. Sexton, express company agent Schuyler C. Blackburn, and real estate agent Magnus W. Barber. The articles of incorporation stated the purpose of the corporation was "to acquire grounds for and erect warehouses and do a general warehouse business...[and to] carry on in all its branches the storing, moving, and packing of furniture and any and all commodities."

The company immediately constructed two four-story, reinforced concrete warehouses for an estimated total of \$40,000 — the A.B.C Storage & Van Company Building at 1015 East 8th Street, which was also known as Warehouse "A," and the building at Main and 33rd Streets, which was known as Warehouse "B." Founding member Samuel E. Sexton's contracting firm, Huckle & Sexton, built both buildings.

Around 1890, Samuel E. Sexton and George Huckle formed the partnership of Huckle & Sexton, which continued until circa 1914. During their partnership, the firm maintained offices in Downtown Kansas City at the New York Life Building at 20 West 9th Street. After the dissolution of the partnership, Huckle continued in the contracting business with his sons, who remained in the construction business well into the 1950s and 1960s. Of the twenty-seven identified *Huckle & Sexton* buildings constructed in Kansas City, fifteen are residential properties. Among their commercial and industrial projects are oil company, telephone utility, and automobile company buildings, as well as the two A.B.C. Storage & Van Company warehouses. They worked often with Kansas City architect Charles A. Smith, who designed more than half of their known buildings.



**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company,
Warehouse "A," 1015 East 8th Street, c.1955**
ABC Business Records Center, Kansas City, MO



**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company,
Warehouse "B," Main and 33rd Streets, 1910**
Kansas City Star, 21 January 1910

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The 1908-1909 construction of these A.B.C. Storage & Van Company buildings reflects the expansion of public storage facilities coinciding with the geographic movement of residential and commercial development away from the older core of industrial and central business districts. Their locations — eight blocks east of the nearest downtown storage facility and nine blocks south of the nearest rail yard storage facility — deliberately catered to the growing residential neighborhoods developing to the east and south of downtown Kansas City, which were affluent middle-class neighborhoods where there was a demand for packing, moving, and storage of household goods, records, and valuables.³⁸

Both of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company buildings — Warehouse “A” and Warehouse “B” — were on streets with active streetcar lines and paved streets. The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company marketed these

locations as, “Away from the down-town fire hazard,” and advertised the services of their facilities not only to the upscale households in the vicinity, but also to downtown businesses in need of records storage. Of the eighteen other storage companies operating in Kansas City, the locations of A.B.C. Storage & Van Company’s warehouses “A” and “B” were the farthest east and the farthest south.³⁹



The buildings themselves were marketing tools. The four-story reinforced concrete structures had state-of-the-art fireproof construction, a fact the company stressed in its advertising. Founding shareholder Samuel Sexton’s building firm, Huckle & Sexton, constructed both buildings. Completed by the end of 1908, Warehouse “A” was four stories tall, had a floor plate measuring 69 feet by 67 feet, and featured a basement; a separate brick stable measuring 69 feet by 35 feet occupied the south end of the property. Completed in 1909, Warehouse “B,” which was also four stories tall, had a floor plate

measuring 75 feet by 50 feet, and featured a full basement as well as separate stable facilities. Both buildings featured large floor plates sub-divided into smaller storage rooms by fireproof hollow tile walls, and accessed through tall, heavy iron doors. The sub-division of the storage spaces into “separate locked fire proof compartments,” was yet another feature the company advertised.⁴⁰ Furthermore, they offered

³⁸ Hess, 12.

³⁹ Hoyer Directory Company, *1907 Hoyer's Kansas City Directory*, 1805.

⁴⁰ Gate City Directory Company, *1910 Kansas City Directory*, 1977.

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secure valuables vaults, piano moving and storage, silver vaults, heated piano rooms, and such services as "expert packers and shippers," as well as "piano and van service."⁴¹ Through the design of their buildings and advanced amenities, the founders of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company set themselves apart and positioned themselves as a new state-of-the-art commercial storage facility.

Under president and general manager S. C. Blackburn, the company expanded rapidly during its first five years. In 1910, the company constructed a full-height 75-foot-by-49-foot addition to the rear of Warehouse "B" on Main Street, as well as a 94-foot-by-17-foot wood-framed lumber storage shed at the rear of the property. In 1911, the company added a full-height 69-foot-by-50-foot addition to the rear of the Warehouse "A" building on East 8th Street. In 1912, further renovations to Warehouse "B" included the addition of two stories and the redesign of the primary façade by the architectural firm of Smith, Rea & Lovitt. By the end of 1912, the company offered over 85,000 square feet of storage space in their two suburban locations.



In addition to physical expansions of the A.B.C. Company's buildings, by 1913 the company began to transition their transport fleet from horses to auto vans. The A.B.C. Company was one of the first in Kansas City to offer such modern vehicular transport services. Up to this time, A.B.C. maintained draft horse stables at the rear of their warehouses; upon the conversion to auto vans, they converted the stables to serve as auto repair and storage facilities.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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In February 1913, Warehouse "B" on Main Street withstood a fire that engulfed two garage buildings adjoining it to the south. The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company took the opportunity to underscore the fireproof nature of their warehouse facilities and took out multiple advertisements discussing the fire in no less than four newspapers, including the *Kansas City Journal*, the *Kansas City Times*, the *Kansas City Post*, and the *Catholic Register*. The large copy advertisements included headlines such as, "Kansas City's HOTTEST FIRE Failed to make an impression on our Fireproof Storage Warehouse," "DON'T WORRY Your Household Goods are Safe," and "Nobody Worried About the Safety of Their Household Goods Stored in Our Fireproof Warehouse at 33rd and Main Streets."⁴² Further capitalizing on the situation, later that year, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company changed their name to A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company.

Kansas City's
HOTTEST FIRE
Failed to make an impression on our
Fireproof Storage Warehouse

The Kansas City Journal says of the two garage buildings adjoining our Fireproof Warehouse at thirty-third and Main streets were destroyed by the most intense fire in Kansas City in a long time, but the warehouse itself could not prevent the walls.

**IT PAYS TO
STOREHOUSEHOLD
GOODS IN A SAFE
PLACE.
IT SAVES WORRY**

OUR FACILITIES - Warehouse and Art Studio, Mothproof Rug and Trunk Rooms, Private Fireproof Compartments, vaults for Silver Plate, etc. The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company has been making arrangements for the city. Report, Packets of 1000, 500, 250, 100, 50, 25, 10, 5, 2, 1, 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32, 1/64, 1/128, 1/256, 1/512, 1/1024, 1/2048, 1/4096, 1/8192, 1/16384, 1/32768, 1/65536, 1/131072, 1/262144, 1/524288, 1/1048576, 1/2097152, 1/4194304, 1/8388608, 1/16777216, 1/33554432, 1/67108864, 1/134217728, 1/268435456, 1/536870912, 1/1073741824, 1/2147483648, 1/4294967296, 1/8589934592, 1/17179869184, 1/34359738368, 1/68719476736, 1/137438953472, 1/274877906944, 1/549755813888, 1/1099511627776, 1/2199023255552, 1/4398046511104, 1/8796093022208, 1/17592186044416, 1/35184372088832, 1/70368744177664, 1/140737488355328, 1/281474976710656, 1/562949953421312, 1/1125899906842624, 1/2251799813685248, 1/4503599627370496, 1/9007199254740992, 1/18014398509481984, 1/36028797018963968, 1/72057594037927936, 1/144115188075855872, 1/288230376151711744, 1/576460752303423488, 1/1152921504606846976, 1/2305843009213693952, 1/4611686018427387904, 1/9223372036854775808, 1/18446744073709551616, 1/36893488147419103232, 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The success of the company demanded additional space to accommodate increased demand for storage and, in 1920, the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company contracted with the Vansant Construction



**A.B.C. Fireproof Warehouse Company,
Warehouse "C," 3127 Prospect Avenue, c.1950**
ABC Business Records Center, Kansas City, MO

Company to construct a new six-story reinforced concrete warehouse building from designs by Smith, Rea & Lovitt. Located at 3127 Prospect Avenue, between East 31st Street and East Linwood Avenue, the terra cotta-clad building cost \$75,000 and increased the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company's total square footage of storage space by more than 47,000 square feet.

By 1920, Oscar W. Thomas, once the firm's stenographer, joined the board of directors and assumed the positions of secretary and treasurer. Thomas invested heavily in the company and was integral to operations, which were headquartered in Warehouse "A." He was an active leader of the Missouri Chapter of the National Furniture

Warehousemen's Association at a time when the organization was attempting to address the issue of empty return trips, or "deadheading." In this capacity, Thomas was voted chairman of the committee that drew up the constitution that founded Allied Van Lines, Inc. in 1928 and he became its first President.⁴⁴

In the course of business, the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company found that office moves often resulted in the installation of new furniture and the storage or discarding of old equipment. As a result, in



**A-B-C Scientific Fur Depository Lobby,
Warehouse "C," 3127 Prospect Avenue, c.1932**
ABC Business Records Center, Kansas City, MO

1928, A-B-C expanded into the office furniture merchandising business and began purchasing used office equipment for resale. The company operated this subsidiary successfully until it grew to occupy nearly the entirety of Warehouse "A."

Around 1930, the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company further diversified their enterprise by specializing in the fur storage business with the establishment of a subsidiary, A-B-C Scientific Fur Depositories. In addition to providing fur storage in twelve humidity-controlled vaults

⁴⁴ Allied Van Lines, Inc., "Rags to Riches: Allied Founder, 53 Years on Job, Going Strong," *Dispatcher* 1, no. 5 (September 1961), 8, private collection of ABC Business Records Center, Kansas City, MO.

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within the company's three buildings, this new entity also provided repair, reglazing, cleaning, fumigation, and restyling and tailoring services through a master furrier. They offered seasonal rates, night watchmen, and insurance not only on the storage facility, but also on the delivery transport trucks. As a means of advertising their new venture, they formed contacts and commissioned accounts with local dry cleaners



that would solicit their services and gather furs for pick-up by A-B-C. The Prospect Avenue location at Warehouse "C" featured a formal fur depository lobby and fur shop, as well as a highly visible massive vault door leading into the fur storage rooms. In 1937, the company stored over fifteen thousand garments.

During the 1930s and into the 1940s, A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company provided the full range of moving and storage services being offered within the industry at that time — packing; local and coast-to-coast moving as agents of Allied Van Lines; household, office, valuables, and fur storage; private lockers; and multiple, convenient locations throughout the city. The company maintained a nationwide network of



wholesale accounts with other moving and storage warehouse companies from Charlotte, North Carolina to Los Angeles, California, which increased the efficient moving and transfer of household goods to distant locations.

During this period, the company removed many of the interior partition walls on the upper storage floors of its buildings to make room for larger, open display areas and office furniture storage spaces. The rear section of the first floor was redecorated for display purposes, and the company maintained interior design staff to assist customers with space-saving and decorating ideas.⁴⁵ The company's new and used furniture and

⁴⁵ Don Thomas phone interview by Kerry Davis, 19 July 2006, Kansas City, MO, transcript, Sally Schwenk Associates, Inc. Don Thomas was the long-standing manager of A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company, and was the son of Oscar W. Thomas, the former president of the company

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office equipment wholesale-retail division serviced accounts throughout the Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma regions.⁴⁶

Oscar W. Thomas became president of A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company in 1942. The company continued to operate successfully through the 1950s, and by the early 1960s they occupied four warehouses (three owned and one leased) totaling more than 194,000 square feet of storage space. The company's fleet of trucks and vans included fifteen vehicles. Thomas' three sons followed him into the business during the 1930s and 1940s. The eldest, Oscar W. Thomas, Jr. rose to be the company's president; Samuel Thomas served as executive vice president; and Don Thomas managed the growing furniture division.



Under the management of the Thomas brothers, the company continued to enjoy steady growth and success through the 1970s and into the 1980s. A failed merger with another furniture sales company in the 1980s caused financial strain that necessitated the sale of the company and its assets. The two eldest sons, Oscar and Samuel, retired from the business, but Don Thomas remained with the A-B-C Fireproof Warehouse Company, which continued its operations at Warehouse "A" and was under new ownership. The business focused on furniture sales, refinishing, and distribution, with Don Thomas continuing to serve as manager until the company vacated the property in circa 2000 and consolidated their operations in Overland Park, Kansas. Today, Warehouse "B" continues to operate as a records storage warehouse and retains a high degree of integrity; Warehouse "C" was demolished during the 1990s.

⁴⁶ Allied Van Lines, Inc., "Rags to Riches: Allied Founder, 53 Years on Job, Going Strong," 9.

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THE COMMERCIAL WAREHOUSE FUNCTIONAL PROPERTY TYPE

A number of technological factors contributed to the form of commercial and industrial buildings during the first decades of the twentieth century. One of the most important was the introduction of reinforced concrete for floor slabs and structural members. The extreme compressive strength of reinforced concrete, its vibration resistance and fireproof qualities, as well as its low cost compared to steel, quickly made it indispensable to the design of buildings requiring high load-carrying capacities, such as tall office buildings, manufacturing facilities, and warehouses.⁴⁷

The reinforced concrete structure of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building reflects state-of-the-art construction technology in Kansas City for storage and warehouse building construction in the first decade of the twentieth century. Until 1902, the world's tallest reinforced concrete structure was only six stories tall. The sixteen-story Ingalls Building erected in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1902 became the world's first reinforced concrete over steel frame construction skyscraper and established construction formulas practiced today. By 1905, textbooks on the principles of reinforced concrete construction appeared and the use of large reinforced concrete structural members began.

Kansas City's first reinforced concrete buildings, which date to 1904, were among the earliest in the nation. Within the first decade of the twentieth century, several Kansas City architects initiated the use of reinforced concrete structural elements in the construction of large buildings, among them John McKecknie, Louis Curtiss, and James Oliver Hogg. Two small high-rise buildings built during this period and noted for striking structural innovations were the 1903-1904 Gumbel Building⁴⁸ designed by McKecknie and the 1908-1909 Boley Building⁴⁹ designed by Curtiss. Both buildings involved the large-scale use of structural members made of reinforced concrete. At this time, Curtiss also incorporated the use of reinforced concrete structural members in his phased design of the Baltimore Hotel, the Argyle Building,⁵⁰ and his own Studio building at 1118 McGee Street. One of the first storage facilities designed with the use of reinforced concrete was the D.A. Morr Storage and Warehouse Company Building⁵¹ designed by Hogg. Having just lost a wood-framed storage warehouse and all of its contents to fire in 1905, the company contracted Hogg to construct a fireproof building; Hogg recommended reinforced concrete construction. *Kansas City Architect and Builder* described the merits of the building's design in December 1905, "Reinforced concrete is the ideal building material and there is no doubt but it will

⁴⁷ "A Reinforced Concrete Warehouse." *The Architect and Builder*, December 1905, 19, Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Microfilm.

⁴⁸ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

⁴⁹ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

⁵⁰ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

⁵¹ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

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largely displace both wood and iron in the future... and warehouses built in the old method will be placed at a great disadvantage in the competition for business.”⁵²

The first reinforced concrete structures hid structural and functional elements behind masonry walls designed in classical, traditional treatments.⁵³ Builders and architects of such structures typically incorporated fine materials and decorative embellishments to convey traditional concepts of style. Thus, it was common during the first decade of the twentieth century for brick, cut stone, and terra cotta embellishments to disguise modern steel frame construction and reinforced concrete floors and columns in designs that ran the gamut of expression from high style Revival treatments to simple, restrained patterned brickwork motifs. The design of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building reflects this treatment. The vitrified brick with restrained, contrasting patterned brickwork and cut stone decorative features express an established vernacular commercial architectural style connoting the stability of the business. While the finished building looked like a traditional masonry load-bearing structure, behind the brick curtail wall was an innovative modern structural system.

The storage and transfer businesses of the early twentieth century have strong associations with the commercial warehouse functional property type originally found on river wharfs and railroad freight yards. All were designed for the receipt, storage, and transfer of goods. During the late nineteenth century, these buildings had strong physical associations with railroad freighting and were sited and designed to store and transfer raw materials and manufactured items either as leased storage space or “transfer houses.” The plans of the commercial warehouse functional property type incorporated large open storage areas with minimal office space. The exterior design was understated and, unless the building served as a regional headquarters, there was no pronounced sense of pedestrian entry. Additionally, because of the obvious marketing value, their design reflected the latest in fireproof construction.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the warehouse and transfer industry expanded beyond the distribution of raw materials and manufactured goods to serve the storage and moving needs of the general public. As a result, the commercial warehouse functional property type no longer necessarily located adjacent to the railroad tracks, and building designs began to incorporate new spaces and features specific to the expanding market demand. While the necessity of a fireproof building with large open storage spaces still drove overall building design, new features included a more pronounced sense of pedestrian entry; a formal lobby space; sales offices; and smaller, sub-divided storage rooms and vaults designed for specific storage purposes such as furs, woolens, silver, records, and furniture. New equipment included systems for humidity and temperature control and fumigation chambers for furs and woolens.

⁵² “A Reinforced Concrete Warehouse,” 19.

⁵³ Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 39.

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The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building reflects this transition in the commercial warehouse functional property type. Its reinforced concrete construction represents state-of-the-art fireproof technology. The street-level design of the primary façade incorporates a recognizable two-part commercial block storefront configuration with a recessed central entrance flanked by large display windows and surmounted by a terra cotta sign panel frieze. The interior spatial arrangement includes all of the latest in storage and service functions under one roof: a formal lobby, administrative office spaces, fur storage rooms, valuables vaults, sub-divided storage spaces to maximize the efficiency of fumigation and humidity and temperature control, and large open floor storage. The lobby's features included such formal finishes as fourteen-foot-high ceilings; painted plaster walls, ceilings and columns; terrazzo floors; marble baseboard trim; and decorative window trim molding. Behind the formal public spaces, the building's utilitarian and unfinished spaces include various sizes of storage rooms, loading docks, transport corridors, and auto truck service spaces on the first floor.

SUMMARY OF COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is a physical reminder of the rapid growth and diversification of the commercial storage industry during the early years of the twentieth century. Its location on the east edge of the Kansas City central business district, adjacent to the growing residential neighborhoods along Independence Avenue, reflects a strategic move away from fire-prone industrial and commercial areas near railroad freight shipping depots. Additionally, it conveys its strong associations with the establishment of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company's moving and storage empire in Kansas City during the first decades of the twentieth century, the later founding of Allied Van Lines, and the broader development of the moving and storage industry in Kansas City, Missouri. The first of three warehouses constructed by the company, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building (Warehouse "A") had the longest association with the original company and was the center of operations for much of the company's early history.

SUMMARY OF ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building reflects the progressive technologies of steel and concrete construction that emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century. The use of state-of-the-art construction technology and restrained, patterned brickwork treatments reflect a transitional period in the design and construction of commercial buildings that occurred in the United States beginning in 1890s and continuing into the first decades of the twentieth century. The building is among a select number of buildings erected in the first decade of the twentieth century that utilized new technological advancements in reinforced concrete technology in Kansas City and it is significant for its engineering and structural design. Furthermore, the design and construction of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building illustrate a transitional warehouse building type new to Kansas City. The layout and spatial arrangement

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successfully integrated the diverse functional services and storage options for household goods and business records being introduced within the commercial warehouse industry at the time. Its fenestration patterns, massing, scale, and fireproof materials clearly distinguish it as a distinct early twentieth century commercial property type. Because of its high degree of historic architectural integrity, the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building today successfully communicates the architectural and commercial features that allowed the building to continue in its original function for almost one hundred years. As such, the building reflects its associations with commercial architectural development in Kansas City, reflecting common features of a particular class of the commercial building property type.

The architectural significance of the A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building is due to its embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a specific type, period, and method of construction. The four-story reinforced concrete building reflects the earliest phase of reinforced concrete construction in Kansas City and in the United States.⁵⁴ Moreover, the building's design is an excellent representative example of the evolution in design and materials of the commercial warehouse functional property type in Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵⁴ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, updated ed. (New York: AltaMira Press, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 82.

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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

Photographer:

Brad Finch
F-Stop Photography
Kansas City, Missouri

Date of Photographs:

June 2006

Location of Digital Photographs on CD-ROM: Missouri State Historic Preservation Office
Jefferson City, Missouri

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	North (primary) façade and east (side) elevation	Southwest
2.	North (primary) façade, main entrance	South
3.	North (primary) façade, street-level view	West
4.	West (side) elevation	East
5.	West (side) elevation, detail	East
6.	South (rear) elevation	North
7.	First floor, main lobby	North
8.	First floor, main lobby, vault	South
9.	First floor, main lobby, vault interior	South
10.	First floor, main office	North
11.	First floor, fur vault entrance	South
12.	First floor, fur vault interior	South
13.	First floor, receiving window	Northeast
14.	First floor, freight elevator corridor	West
15.	First floor, loading dock	Northeast
16.	Second floor, typical open storage space	Southeast
17.	Third floor, original storage room doors	East
18.	Fourth floor, typical open storage space	Northeast
19.	Fourth floor, typical storage rooms	Northwest
20.	Fourth floor, freight elevator and fire door	West

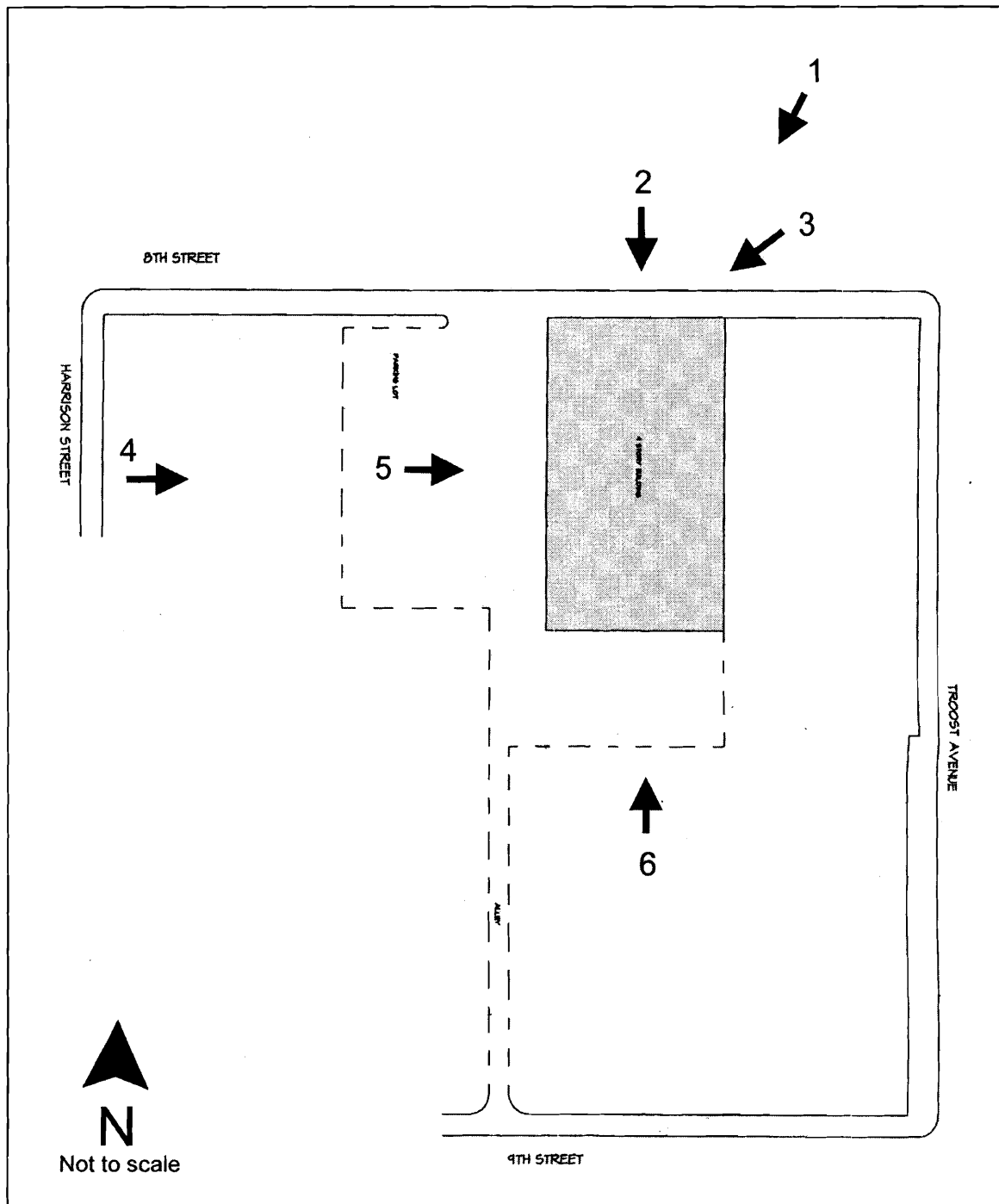
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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

**A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY BUILDING
SITE PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**



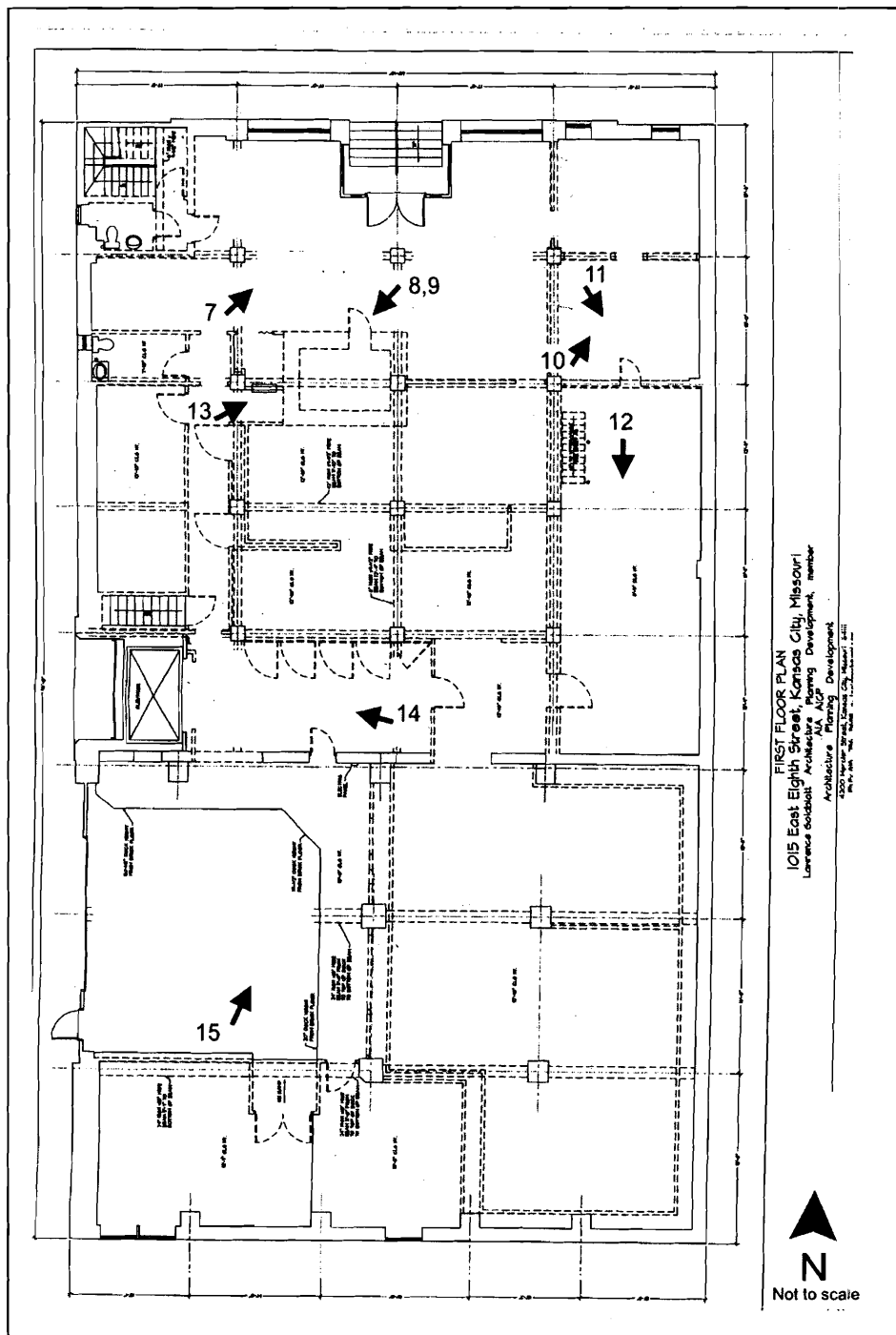
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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
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**A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY BUILDING
FIRST FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**



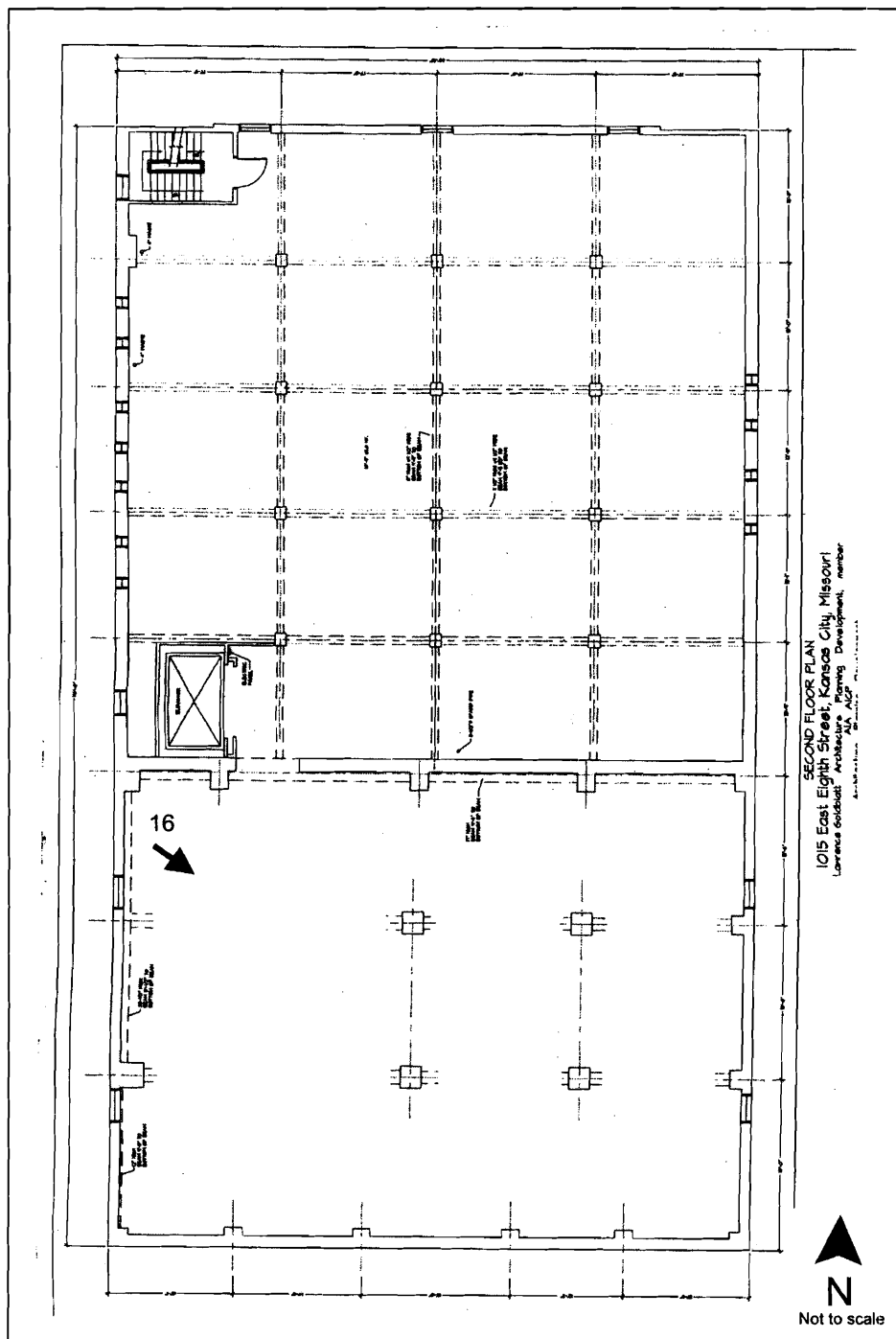
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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

**A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY BUILDING
SECOND FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**



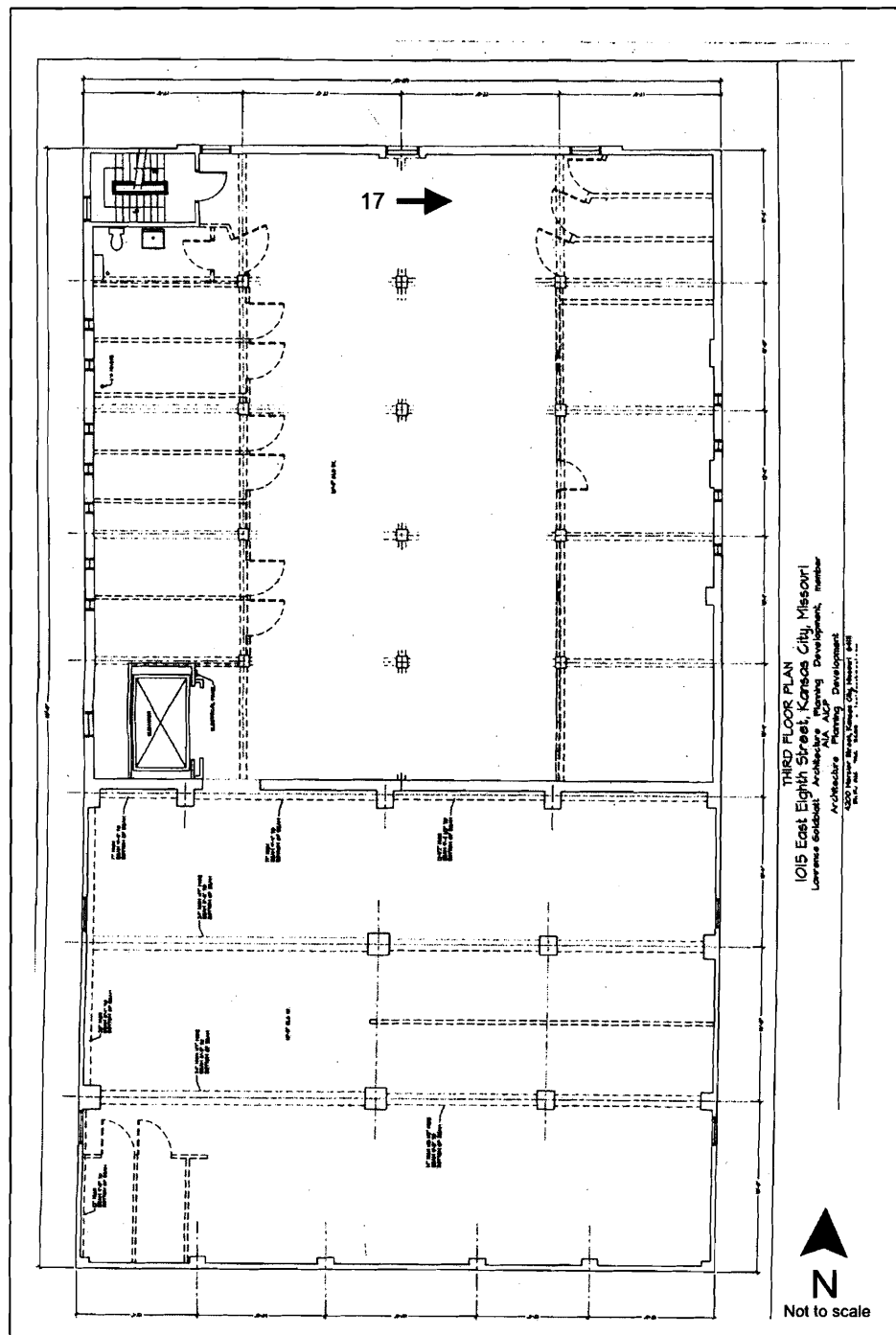
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**A.B.C. Storage & Van Company Building
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**A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY BUILDING
THIRD FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**



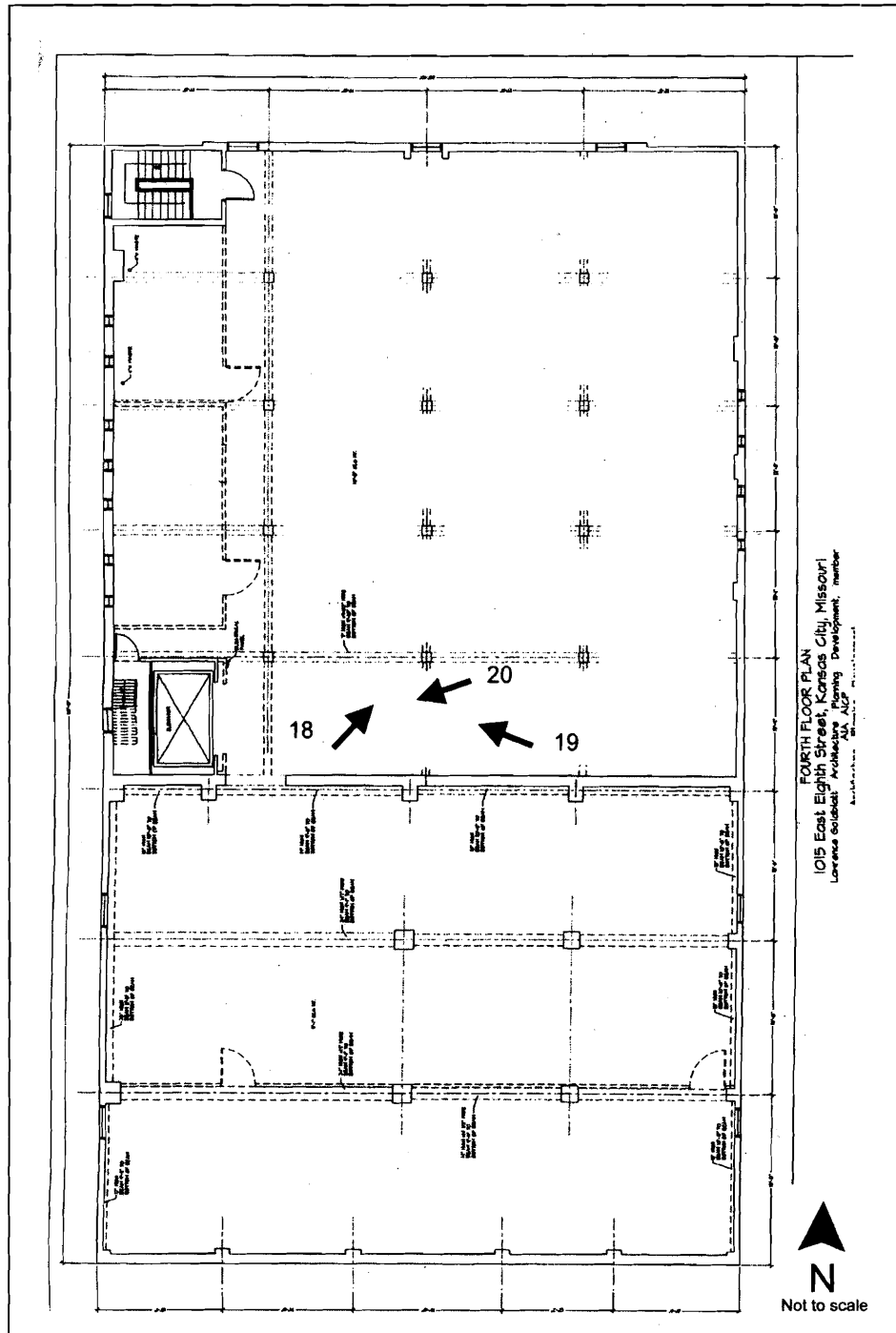
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**A.B.C. STORAGE & VAN COMPANY BUILDING
FOURTH FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**







ABC STORAGE & VAN CO.

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