

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.

historic name Bon Air Apartments Building

other name/site number N/A

street & town 4127-4133 Locust Street N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64111

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

JUNE 20, 2008  
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

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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Bon Air Apartments Building  
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO  
County and State

**Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings  
in Kansas City, Missouri

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

**Function of Use**

**Historic Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Limestone
walls	BRICK
	STONE
roof	SYNTHETICS
other	METAL

**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

Bon Air Apartments 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)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Period of Significance

1923-1924

### Significant Dates

N/A

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Thurtle, John G.

☒ 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Bon Air Apartments Building  
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

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

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

2 1/ 1/1/1/1/ 1/1/1/1/1/  
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/ 1/1/1/1/ 1/1/1/1/1/  
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/ 1/1/1/1/ 1/1/1/1/1/  
Zone Easting Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

All of Lots 32-35, Block 11, within Vanderbilt Place, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. City Parcel Number 133349.

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 January 2008  
street & number 112 West 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Bon Air Apartments, LLC  
street & number 4135 Walnut Street telephone 816-806-7652  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64113

**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 Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT**

The Bon Air Apartments Building, located at 4127-4133 Locust Street in Kansas City's Mid-Town area, is a four-story building classified as a Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building property type as established in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri." Completed in 1923-1924, the building displays modest decorative embellishment typical of its property type, which includes a pressed metal cornice with modillions and extensive tapestry brickwork executed through cast stone squares and diamonds set within each elevation. Facing onto Locust Street and also visible from Gillham Road, a central component of Kansas City's late-nineteenth and early twentieth century parks and boulevards system, it features two primary elevations (west and east). The load-bearing brick building, with its flat roof and rectangular footprint has the typical size, scale, and massing of an urban Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building. Designed by Kansas City architect, John G. Thurtle, the building incorporates unique design elements including dual primary elevations, alignment parallel (rather than perpendicular) to the street across four narrow urban lots, and the arrangement of its prominent full-height porches supported on square brick piers on the north, south, and east elevations. Both the Locust Street and Gillham Road primary elevations feature a center bay, double-leaf entrance under a decorative metal canopy. Each entrance leads directly into a small entrance foyer and the open staircase; typical of this property type, it lacks a formal entrance lobby. The internal plan incorporates a double-loaded central corridor on each floor flanked by four, self-sufficient one-bedroom apartment units. The corridors run the length of the building (north-south) and open interior staircases at the center of the west and east sides of the building allow access between the four upper floors and the full basement.

The Bon Air Apartment Building retains its key character-defining features, including the lack of a formal entrance lobby and the presence of the original double-loaded corridors with terrazzo floors, unit door openings, and staircases intact on each side. The individual one-bedroom units remain unchanged, retaining their original spaces, wood floors, wood trim (window, base, cornice, door surround, etc.). The original six-over-one and eight-over-one light wood sash windows, interior French doors, and some Murphy beds are intact. The Bon Air Apartment Building retains integrity of its historic location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. All of its significant character-defining design elements and materials are intact and it clearly conveys its original role and historic associations as an apartment building designed for middle-income workers, as defined in the MPDF. Its unique design and stylistic treatment successfully conveys feelings of its period and quality of construction.

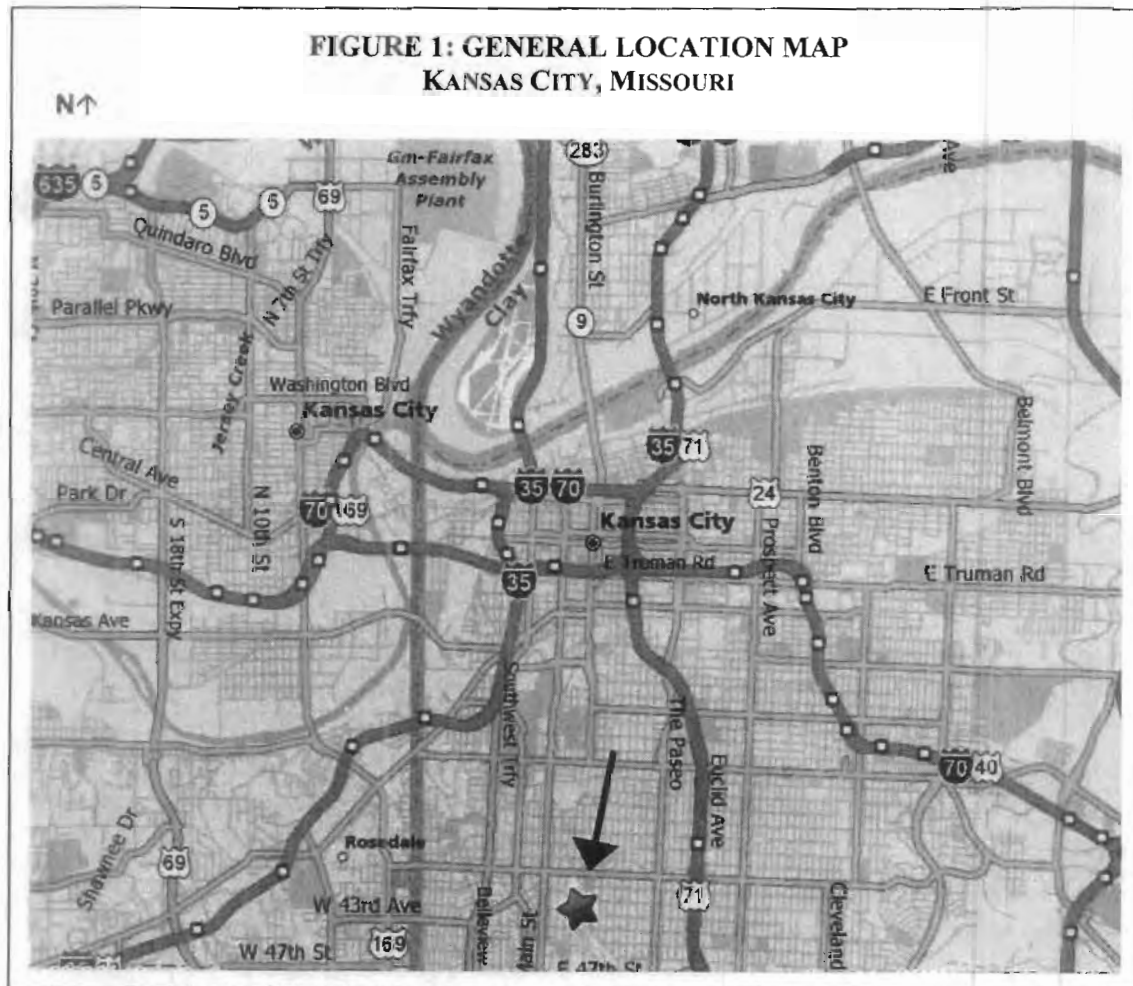
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)



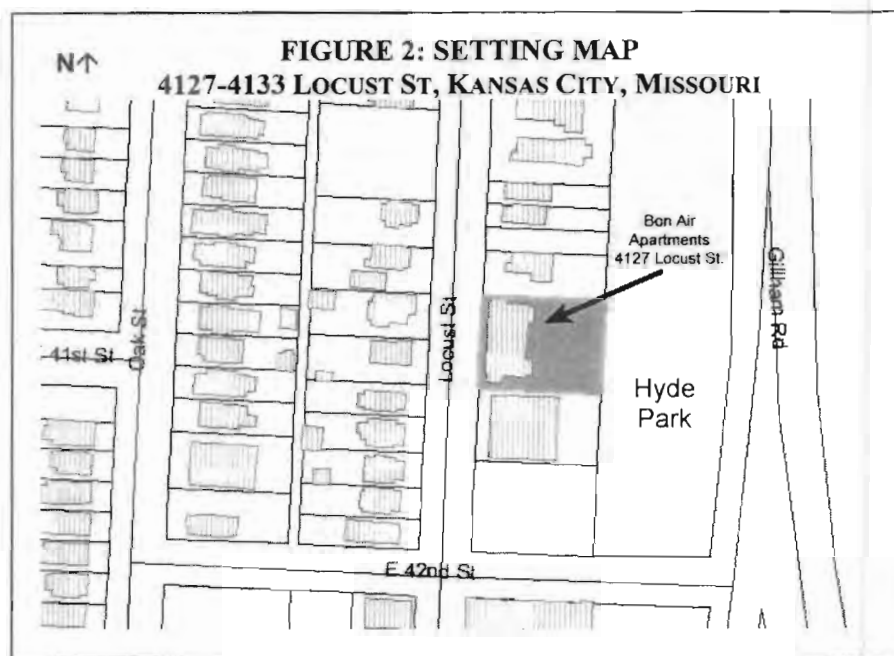
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)



**ELABORATION**

**LOCATION AND SETTING**

The Bon Air Apartments Building is located between Locust Street on the west and Gillham Road on the east in the midst of a residential neighborhood characterized by a mix of single- and multi-family dwellings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Hyde Park forms the east property boundary and the grade descends sharply between Locust Street and Gillham Road at this location, giving the building a prominent site that is visible from the road and the park. Gillham Road is a busy four-lane paved roadway with steep concrete curbs and broad concrete sidewalks and is a component of Kansas City's historic parks and boulevards system.

The building is approximately 78 feet by 41 feet and is situated parallel to street and occupies the west half of four long, narrow 25-by-132-foot lots, which are oriented east-west. The long primary façades face west onto Locust Street and east onto Gillham Road and the building is sited at the Locust Street sidewalk with a shallow (5 foot) set back. A single step leads from the sidewalk to the west entrance porch. A grassy lawn, a buffer of trees, and a small asphalt parking area are located at the east end of the

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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

property. The building is flanked on the north by a single-family dwelling and on the south by a small, non-historic apartment building.

**Exterior**

The Bon Air Apartments Building is a four-story brick building with a rectangular footprint and a flat roof. The exterior walls are red load-bearing brick laid in a variant of the Flemish bond, with five running stretcher rows and every sixth row comprised of alternating headers and stretchers. Dressed stone panels conceal the rough-cut limestone foundation on the west (primary) elevation and exposed on the east (primary) elevation and side elevations.

The west (primary) and east (primary) façades each have seven bays and the side (north and south) elevations each have four bays. Fenestration defines the bays, which are symmetrically arranged on each elevation. The window openings of the primary façades contain single eight-over-one light and paired six-over-one light double-hung sash windows in the outer bays and bands of three, ten-light casement sashes in the center bay. Smaller bathroom windows are restricted to the less visible side elevations and contain the original three-over-one light, vertical muntin sashes. Throughout the building, the original wood window sashes are intact and window openings have header brick sills.

Full-height, square brick columns support stacked open porches on the north, south, and east elevations. These full-height porch structures occur in the first bay of each of the side (north and south) elevations, and in the outermost bays of the east primary elevation. Each porch has a low brick balustrade with cast stone base and railing. A flat roof caps the fourth story porch. The first-story porches on each elevation (a total of four) have non-historic wood paneling enclosures.

A pressed metal canopy shelters the center bay entrance of both the west and east primary facades. Cables anchored into the facade wall that have a decorative chain-link treatment suspend each canopy. The west canopy features a shallow arch to its roof and has non-historic wood supports. Each entrance porch has cheek walls flanking the entrance step(s). The west porch has low cheek walls with a dressed stone treatment flanking a single step; the east porch has high cheek walls (due to the steep change in grade) of brick and rough-cut limestone that flank nine concrete steps. Each canopy features an egg-and-dart trim motif and a band of translucent glass pendants. Each of the primary entrances has the historic full- or half-light wood panel double-leaf doors set within the original openings. The west primary entrance features a dressed stone surround with text in relief over the doors that reads, "BON AIR / 4127 4133"; the east primary entrance has a more modest soldier brick surround with stone corner blocks.



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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

Contrasting cast stone blocks set within each elevation wall provides a tapestry brick decorative treatment throughout the building. Courses of slightly projecting header and soldier brick enframe all openings, featuring cast stone blocks at their intersections that further underscore the tapestry effect. Additional cast stone elements include decorative diamond arrangements in the walls of the center bay and between the third and fourth stories of the west and east (primary) elevations; the continuous belt course that encircles the entire building between the first and second stories, forming the sills of the second story windows; the perimeter balustrade wall railing capstones of each unit's porch; and the parapet coping.

A pressed metal cornice incorporated into the parapet walls spans the full-width of each elevation. The cornice has a very wide eaves overhang with decorative modillions below. The parapet wall has a stepped arrangement on each elevation.

**Interior**

The Bon Air Apartments Building contains approximately 13,000 square feet of space that includes a full basement and four floors of residential apartments. Each residential floor has an identical plan with a central double-loaded corridor flanked on each side by two, one-bedroom apartments. The basement is unfinished and functions as tenant storage and mechanical space. A pair of open staircases at the center of these corridors allows vertical circulation. The west (primary) entrance leads directly into a small vestibule that has a wood-paneled ceiling, marble walls, and a terrazzo floor with inset letters that read, "BON AIR." A second set of double-leaf, full-light doors with sidelights and a leaded glass transom leads directly into the stairwell up to the first floor corridor.

The east entrance foyer is less decorative than the west entrance and lacks the marble wall finishes and wood-paneled ceiling. Both stairwells feature the same cast metal railing, slender balusters, and slender paired newel posts. However, the west stairwell features terrazzo floors at each landing, and terrazzo steps and base trim, while the east stairwell has plain polished concrete landing floors and steps and plain metal kick plates. Double leaf French doors separate the east stairwell from the corridor at each floor. The corridors retain the original terrazzo floors with a decorative perimeter border; plaster wall and ceiling finish; and the original unit door and delivery/service door openings containing both the louvered summer and main doors within their dark stained jambs and trim. Each floor contains four units, one in each corner. Throughout the building, the residential units have a compact four-room plan that includes a living/sleeping area (12½ feet by 16 feet) with swivel and fold-down Murphy bed; a bedroom (13½ feet by 13 feet, including closets); a kitchen/dining area (8 feet by 16 feet); and a full bath (7½ feet by 5¾

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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

feet). Most units retain the original interior single-panel doors, as well as the three sets of double-leaf French doors between the kitchen/dining area and the living/sleeping area; between the living/sleeping area and the bedroom; and between the bedroom and the exterior porch.

**INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT**

The Bon Air Apartments Building meets the integrity criteria for Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Buildings established in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri" and is an excellent example of an early twentieth century apartment building, an increasingly rare property type in Kansas City. Its historic identity is clearly conveyed through its high degree of retention of character-defining features, including its size, scale, and massing, as well as its original location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship. The only apparent alterations include the enclosures of four of the sixteen porches, an easily reversible alteration that does not obscure the overall character or design of the building. The Bon Air Apartments Building continues to clearly convey its historic feelings and associations with the development of middle-income housing during the early twentieth century in Kansas City, Missouri.

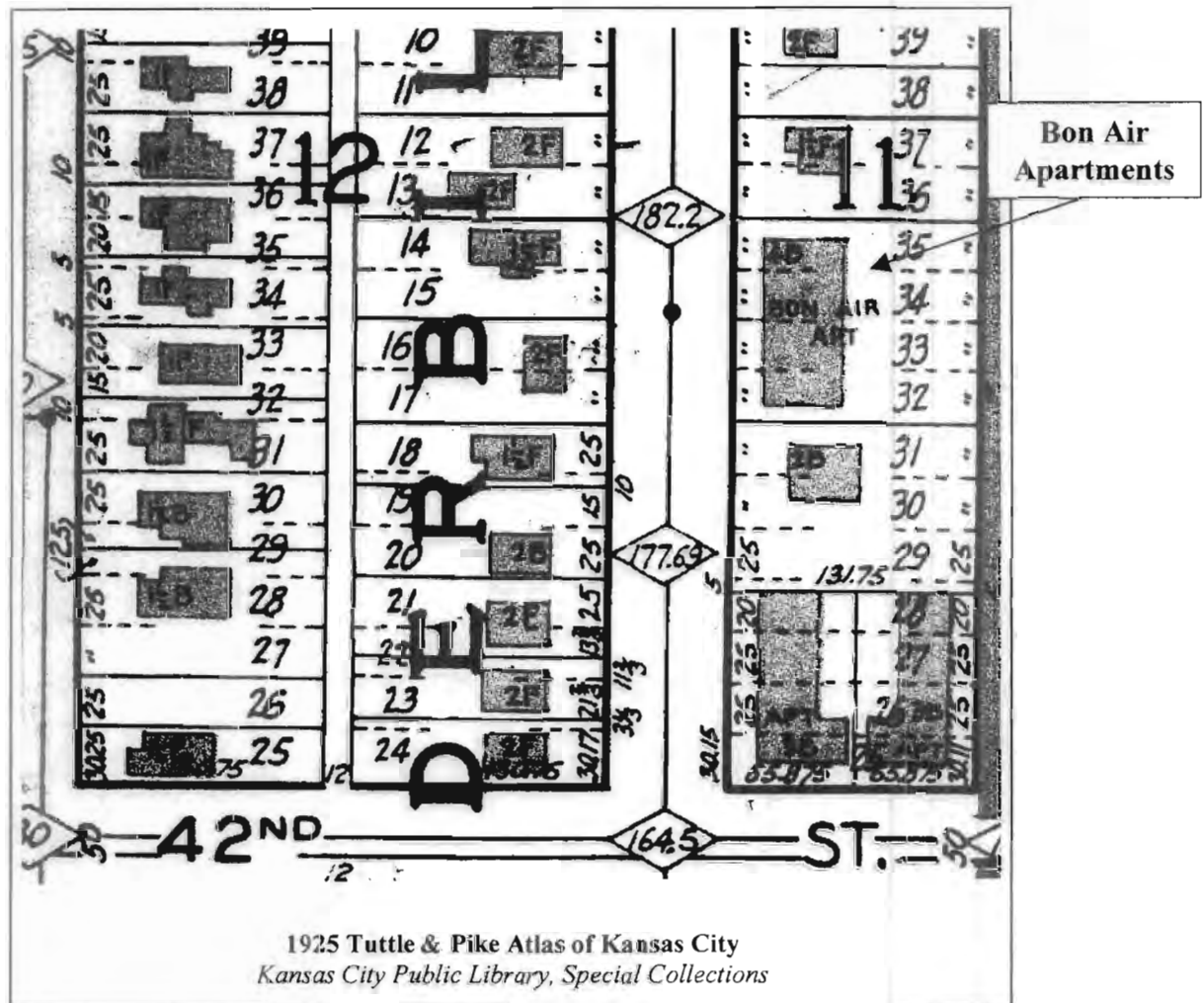
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)



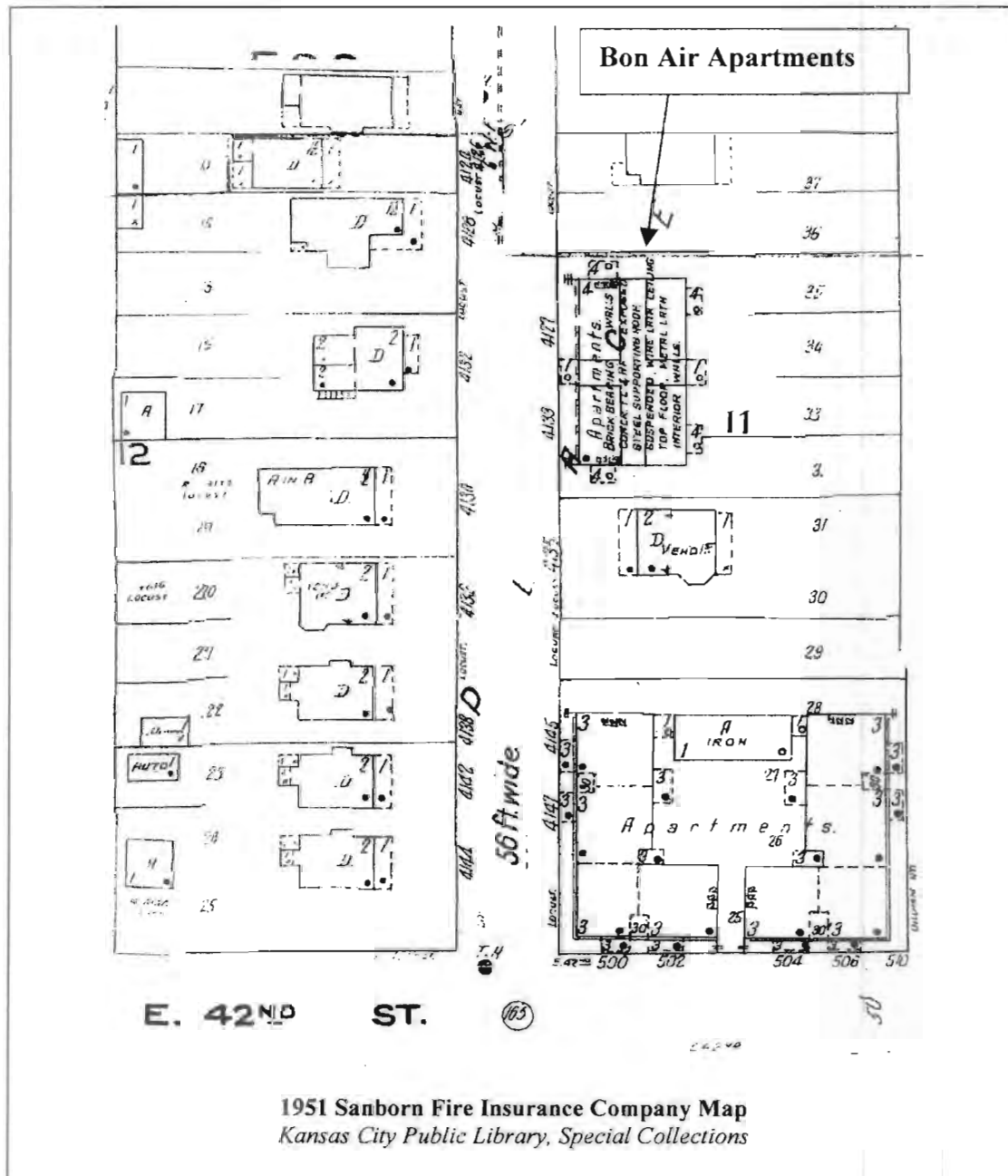
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)



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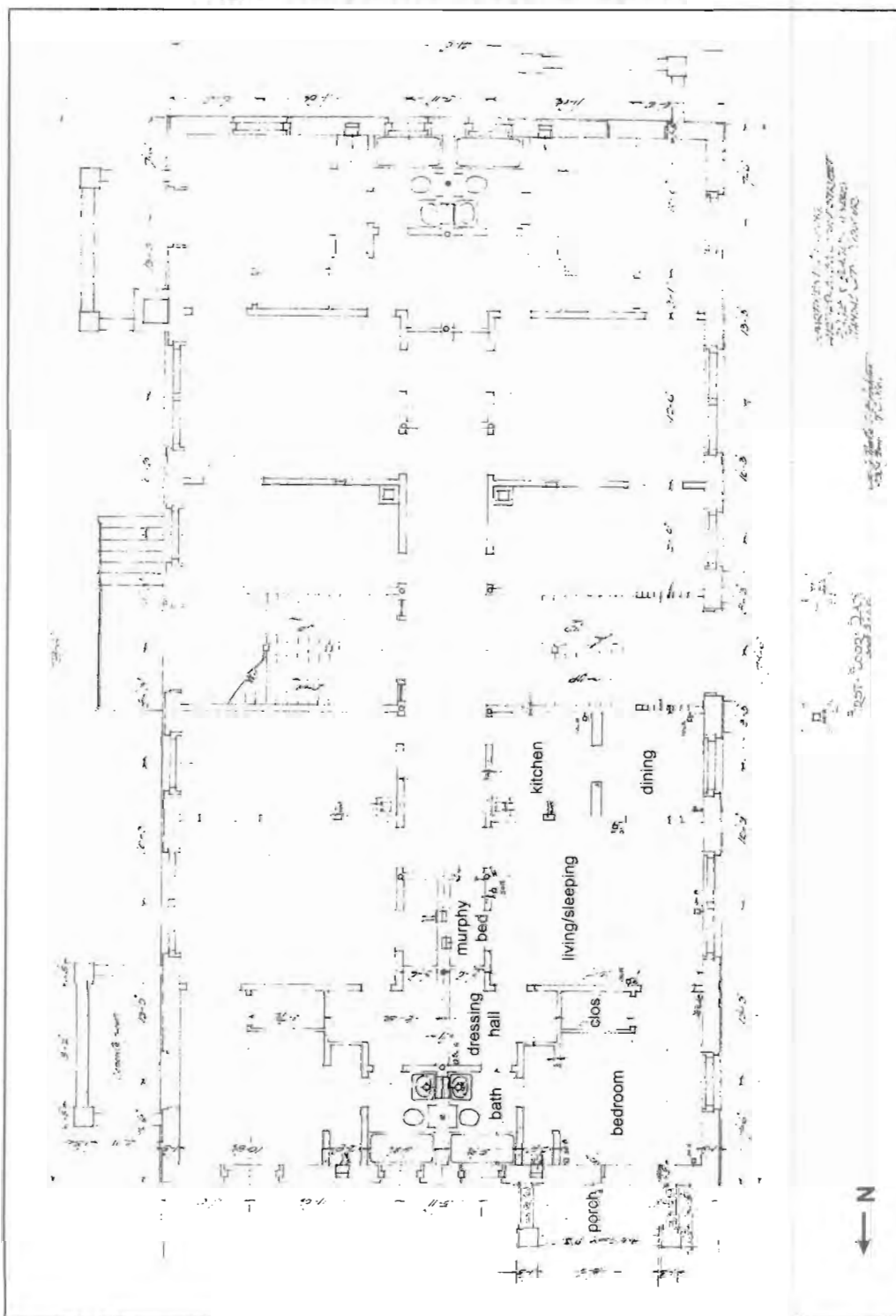
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**BON AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING  
ORIGINAL PLANS - TYPICAL FLOOR**



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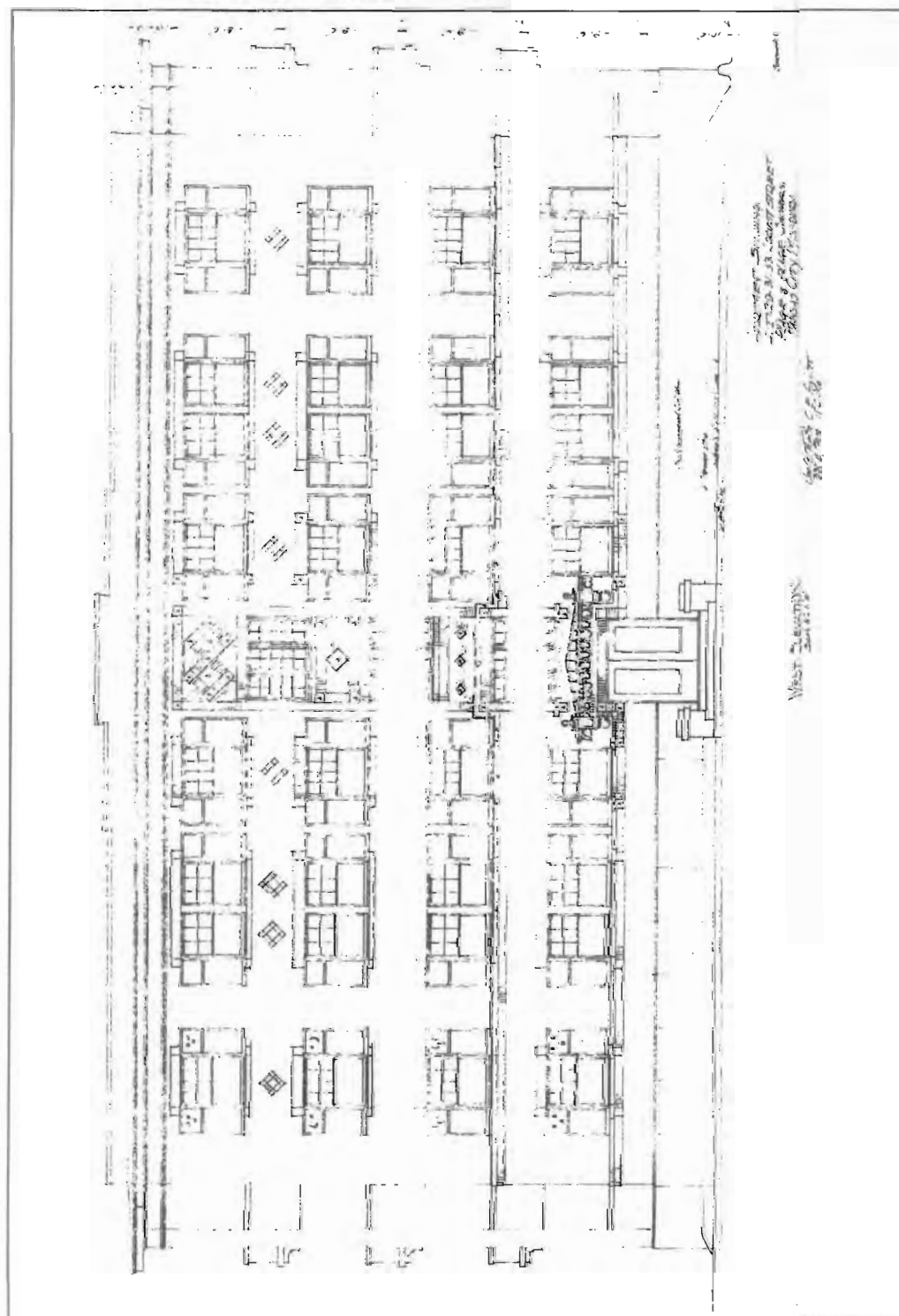
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**BON AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING  
ORIGINAL PLANS - WEST ELEVATION**



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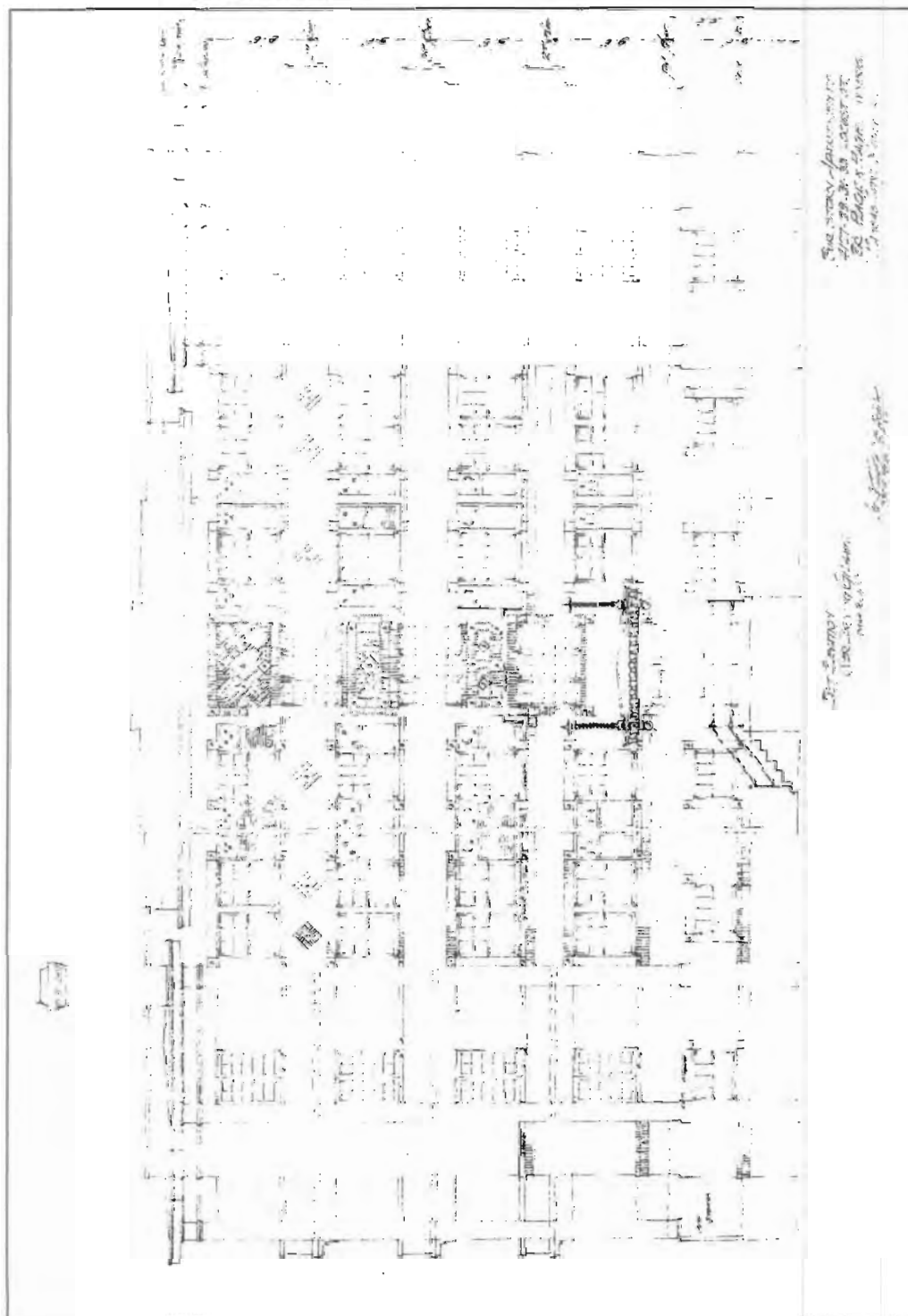
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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**BON AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING  
ORIGINAL PLANS - EAST ELEVATION**



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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Bon Air Apartments Building located at 4127-4133 Locust Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the area of COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri." The building has direct associations with the historic contexts developed as part of the MPDF including: "Residential Development Patterns: 1830-1960," "The Evolution of the Working- and Middle-Class Multi-Family Purpose-Built Apartment Buildings in Kansas City: 1885-1960," and "Architecture of Working- and Middle-Class Apartment Buildings: 1885-1960." The building is locally significant in the area of Architecture for its clearly conveyed associations with the Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building property type as documented in the MPDF. Additionally, it is a rare surviving example of an apartment building designed by Kansas City architect, John G. Thurtle. The building is locally significant in the area of Community Planning and Development for its associations with the evolution of residential buildings designed and located specifically to meet the housing needs of the growing numbers of middle-income citizens during the early twentieth century in Kansas City, Missouri. This property type was a prevalent form of multi-family housing that emerged in the early twentieth century for working- and middle-class residents and introduced new residential housing organization and approaches to daily life in the City. In addition, as an excellent representative example of the type of middle-income multi-family residential buildings built along the City's boulevards and near streetcar lines during the height of the post-World War I apartment building boom in Kansas City, it has significant associations with the economic conditions of Kansas City during the most prolific period of construction of apartment building prior to the end of World War II. The period of significance for the Bon Air Apartments Building is 1923 to 1924, the time during which the building was constructed.



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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**ELABORATION**

**BUILDING HISTORY**

The Bon Air Apartments Building was constructed in 1923-1924 from a design by Kansas City architect John G. Thurtle for the development partners of Plage & Plage. The historic record suggests that Plage & Plage may have been a partnership formed solely for the construction of the Bon Air Apartments.<sup>1</sup> The partnership included Bertrand W. Plage and either his wife, Mary Alice or his son Edward N., or both. The Plage's spent approximately \$35,000 on the building, which measured approximately 78 feet by 41 feet and provided sixteen, self-sufficient, one-bedroom apartment units for middle-income occupants. The building's location, directly adjacent to and visible from the streetcar line on Gillham Road, allowed easy access to shopping districts and places of employment. Upon completion, the Plage's resided in the building with Mary Alice listed as the apartment manager.



**Bon Air Apartments, 4127 Locust Street  
circa 1940**  
*Kansas City Landmarks Commission*

During the economic boom that occurred after World War I, the period from 1920 to 1929 represented the most prolific period of apartment construction in Kansas City prior to the end of World War II.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the grand apartment hotels executed in high style designs that lined nearby Armour and Linwood Boulevards at this time,<sup>3</sup> developers erected more modest buildings like the Bon Air Apartments Building on the adjacent side streets and next to public transit streets and commercial centers that served a clientele of more modest means. The Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building erected to house working-

<sup>1</sup> Plage & Plage are shown on the original plans, however the partnership does not appear in any other known primary or secondary resources. Resources checked include city directories, original building permits, census records, Kansas City Public Library clippings files and catalogue, the Kansas City Landmarks Commission building database, and the World Wide Web.

<sup>2</sup> Sally F. Schwenk, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic Colonnade Apartment Buildings of Kansas City, Missouri" 2003, State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Missouri.

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Bon Air Apartments Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

class and middle-income tenants typically lacked the distinctive architectural style and expensive exterior and interior details and spaces of the apartment buildings erected for the upper- and upper-middle classes. Instead, they commonly exhibited modest exterior decorative treatments, such as tapestry brickwork motifs and a broad cornice with decorative brackets or modillions. The public spaces often featured a long, narrow, double-loaded corridor with compact open stairwells at each end. They had no formal entrance lobby beyond a small vestibule and had no elevator. Each floor featured several units and the interior apartment spaces were more compact than those found in apartment buildings designed for the more affluent, which contained flats with multiple rooms, particularly separate sleeping and dining quarters, and fewer units per building.

During the post-World War I period, the neighborhood surrounding the Bon Air Apartments Building experienced a significant shift in density and character. Apartment buildings and flats filled platted but as yet undeveloped lots and changed the nature of the previously all single-family residential neighborhood. Streetcar lines operating along boulevards, including Linwood and Main and along Gillham Road, stimulated commercial development and the construction of housing for the working- and middle-classes at the intersections of and nearby these public transit lines. By the end of the 1920s, the area within the boundaries of these major thoroughfares contained a wide variety of residential property types, including both modest and grand single-family residences, as well as low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise apartment buildings. Along Locust and Oak Streets, between East 40<sup>th</sup> and East 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets, an array of both large and small apartment buildings stood intermingled with earlier single-family housing, among them about twenty recently constructed multi-family buildings that provided about 200 apartment units and flats housing working- and middle-class tenants. After the end of World War II, the same area saw only one new building constructed by 1951.

**Tenant Analysis**

Designed to meet the needs of the middle-class, the Bon Air Apartments Building housed a cross-section of middle-income individuals. The tenants from the 1920s through the 1930s included a high number of married couples and single men, with few single women and widows residing in the building. The male heads of household generally made their livings in such white-collar occupations as middle and upper managers, salesmen and regional agents, or as vice presidents or other officers of small local companies. Monthly rent at the time ranged from \$75 to \$85. During the mid-1940s and 1950s, the number of single

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<sup>3</sup> District II Armour Boulevard Multiple Resource Area Historic District (Armour Boulevard between Warwick and Kenwood Avenues) was listed in the National Register on July 28, 1983.

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women and widows rose to between 35 and 40 percent of the tenants. These women worked as teachers, seamstresses, stenographers, or as the building manager of the Bon Air. Other tenant occupations of note include a pilot, a civil engineer, and a physician. Of note among the tenants was prolific Kansas City architect, Charles A. Smith, who resided in the building during the 1930s.

Long-term residency was not common, with the exception of a Mr. James W. Dunn, general ticket agent for the Kansas City Terminal Railway who resided in the building from circa 1925 to circa 1945, and the building manager, Mrs. Mary Alice Plage, who resided in the building from its original date of construction until the late 1930s.<sup>4</sup> The length of residency increased after World War II, with almost half the tenants in 1955 having resided in the building for at least ten years. Initially, only a single apartment had a telephone listing; however, telephone usage grew rapidly and by 1945 more than 75 percent of the tenants subscribed to telephone service; by 1955, all Bon Air occupants had telephones. Vacancy was rare, with only two documented vacancies, both appearing in different years during the Great Depression.<sup>5</sup>

**JOHN G. THURTLE, ARCHITECT**

John G. Thurtle was born in 1855 and was a Scottish immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1886. By 1910, the Thurtle family resided in rented quarters on Tracey Avenue near the intersection of East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Thurtle made a living as an architect in the partnership of Thurtle & Thayer.

The firm was responsible for the designs of at least ten known buildings constructed between 1909 and 1912. The majority of their known work includes multi-family dwellings or mixed use commercial/multi-family buildings. Of these, are two pairs of Colonnade apartment buildings designed for the Robert E. Shryock Realty Company, as well as the James E. Fitzpatrick Saloon located in Kansas City's National Register listed Wholesale District (listed 1979).<sup>6</sup>

The historic record suggests that around 1912, Thurtle separated from the firm and continued with his own practice. Ten known Kansas City buildings constructed between 1912 and 1926 can be attributed to his work, five of which have been demolished. While Thurtle's buildings were predominantly multi-unit

<sup>4</sup> Polk's Kansas City (Missouri) Directories, Kansas City, MO: Gate City Directory Co., 1925, 1930, 1935, 1945, 1955, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Microfilm.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> One pair is at 1827-1829 Washington St (1910) and the other is at 3501-3509 Jefferson St. (1912). The Fitzpatrick Saloon is located at 931 Broadway and is a contributing resource to the Wholesale District, listed in 1979.

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apartment buildings, he is also known for the design of the Roanoke Theater on West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as a commercial building (now demolished) at 22<sup>nd</sup> and Washington Streets. Of particular note in his body of work is the General Lew Wallace Study in Crawfordsville, Indiana. Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*, contracted Thurtle for the design of the building, which was completed in 1899. A National Historic Landmark (listed 1976), the building is an eclectic combination of Greek, Romanesque, and Byzantine architecture.<sup>7</sup>

By 1920, Thurtle owned a house at 3304 Flora Avenue that served as his family's residence, as well as the office for his architecture and civil engineering practice.<sup>8</sup> During the 1920s, Thurtle, who was in his mid-60s at the time, designed the Bon Air Apartments for the partnership of Plage & Plage.

**PLAGE & PLAGE, BUILDER/DEVELOPER**

Research sources, including the U.S. Census, city directories, Kansas City Public Library catalogue and Special Collections clippings files, and the Kansas City Landmarks Commission building database indicate that the partnership of Plage & Plage was formed for the purpose of constructing the Bon Air Apartments Building; the partnership included Bertrand W. Plage and either his wife Mary Alice or his son Edward N, or both.

Bertrand W. Plage was born in 1874 in Kansas, the son of a German immigrant and mother who was a native of Illinois. At the age of 31 he married and by 1910, the Plage family lived in Kansas City, where Bertrand made a living as a manager at a telephone company and Mary worked as a typewriter clerk. As the economic climate and the pace of construction grew after the end of World War I, the couple entered into the business of constructing and managing the Bon Air Apartments Building.

Upon completion of the building in 1924, the family resided there with Mary Alice acting as building manager. By 1930, Bertrand was a partner in the building and loan firm of Plage & Evilsizer, district managers for the Greene County Building & Loan Association. The firm maintained offices on Baltimore Avenue in downtown Kansas City. Bertrand died between 1930 and 1935 and Mary Alice continued to reside in the building for at least five more years.

<sup>7</sup> Additional information about the study can be found at General Lew Wallace Study & Museum website - <http://www.ben-hur.com/history.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Original plans show Thurtle's office at 3304 Flora Avenue.

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Bon Air Apartments Building is an excellent example of the Low-Rise Walk-Up Apartment Building property type documented in the MPDF “Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri.” It has direct associations with the patterns of development of multi-family housing associated with the City’s historic parks and boulevards system and public transportation routes. It represents the evolution of residential buildings designed and located specifically to meet the housing needs of the growing numbers of middle-class residents during the early twentieth century in Kansas City, Missouri. By virtue of its architectural integrity, it is an excellent example of the type of multi-family residential building built near streetcar lines during the height of the post-World War I apartment building boom in Kansas City. It meets the MPDF registration requirements and integrity thresholds and clearly conveys both its historical and architectural associations.

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Bon Air Apartments Building  
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Working-Class and Middle-Income Apartment Buildings in Kansas City, Missouri (MPS)

**PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION**

**Photographer:** Brad Finch  
F-Stop Photography  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Date of Photographs:** November 2007

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

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	West (primary) façade	East
2.	West (primary) façade, main entrance	East
3.	East (primary) and south (secondary) elevation	Northwest
4.	East (primary) façade	West
5.	West stairwell and entrance vestibule	West
6.	West stairwell, landing between third and fourth floors	East
7.	Fourth floor corridor (typical)	North
8.	Fourth floor, typical unit entrances	North
9.	Fourth floor, typical unit living/sleeping area	Southwest
10.	Third floor, typical unit living/sleeping area Murphy bed	Northwest
11.	Fourth floor, typical bedroom view into living room and kitchen beyond	North
12.	Fourth floor, typical unit kitchen	East



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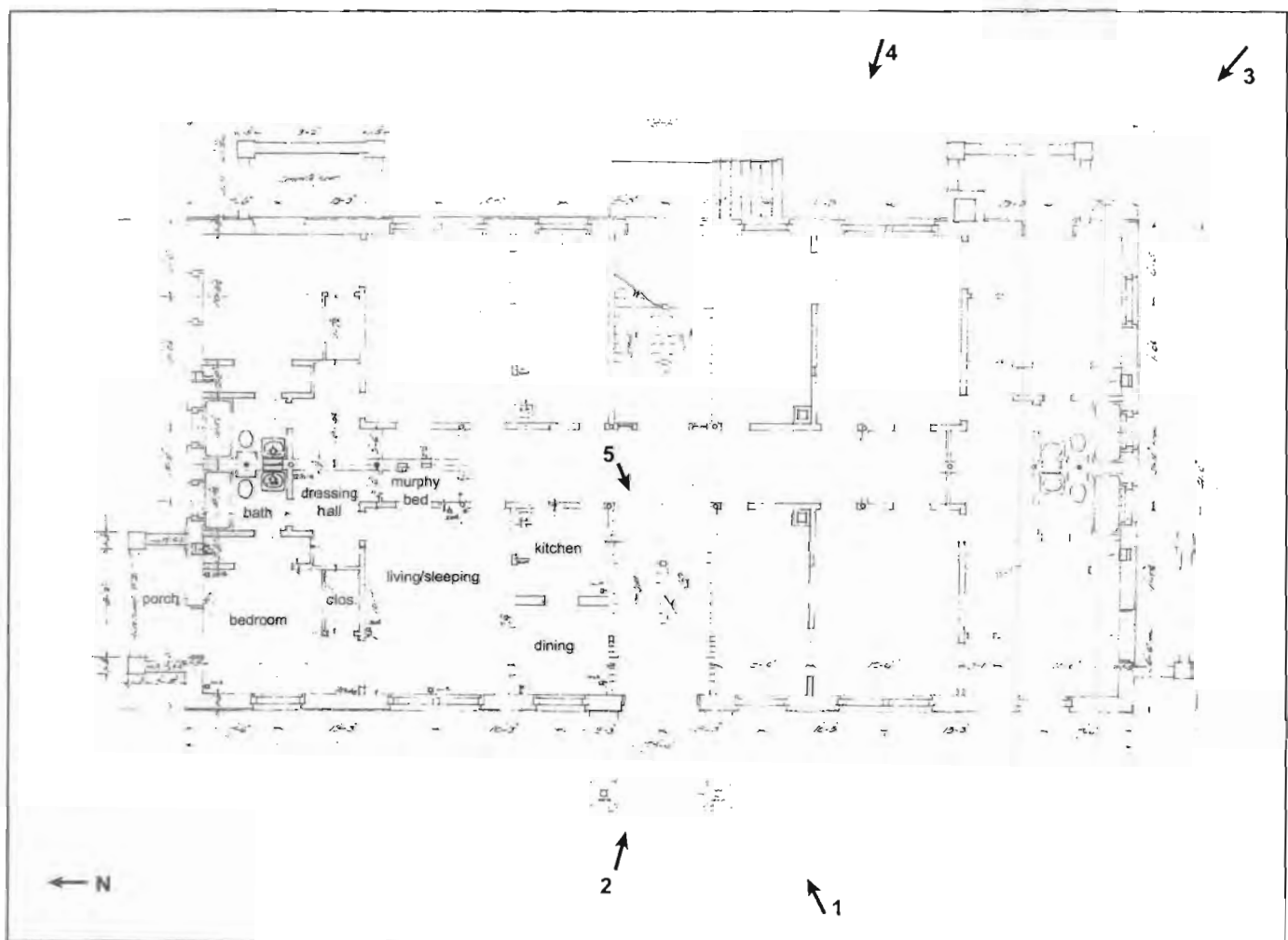
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**BON AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING  
SITE AND FIRST FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**



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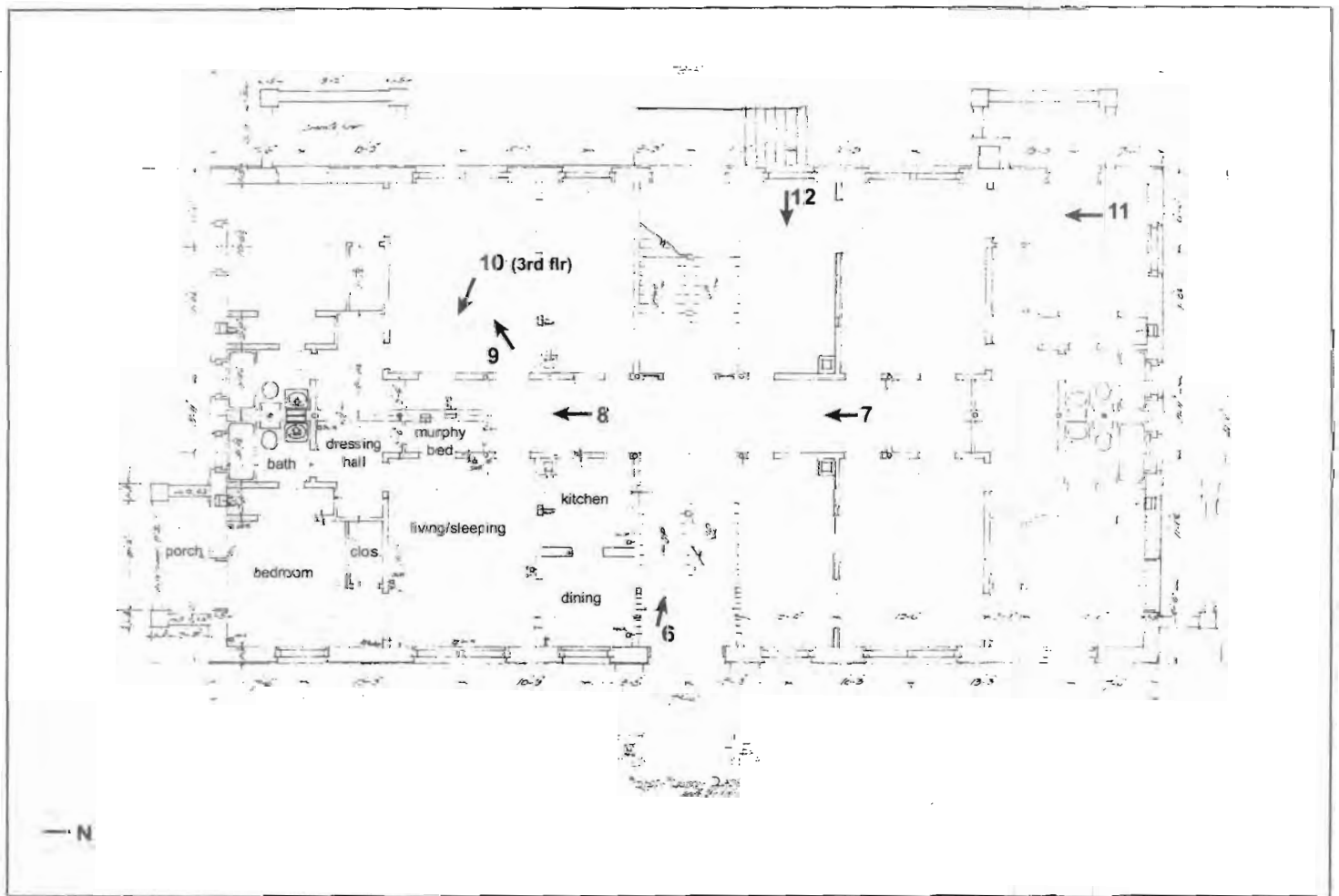
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

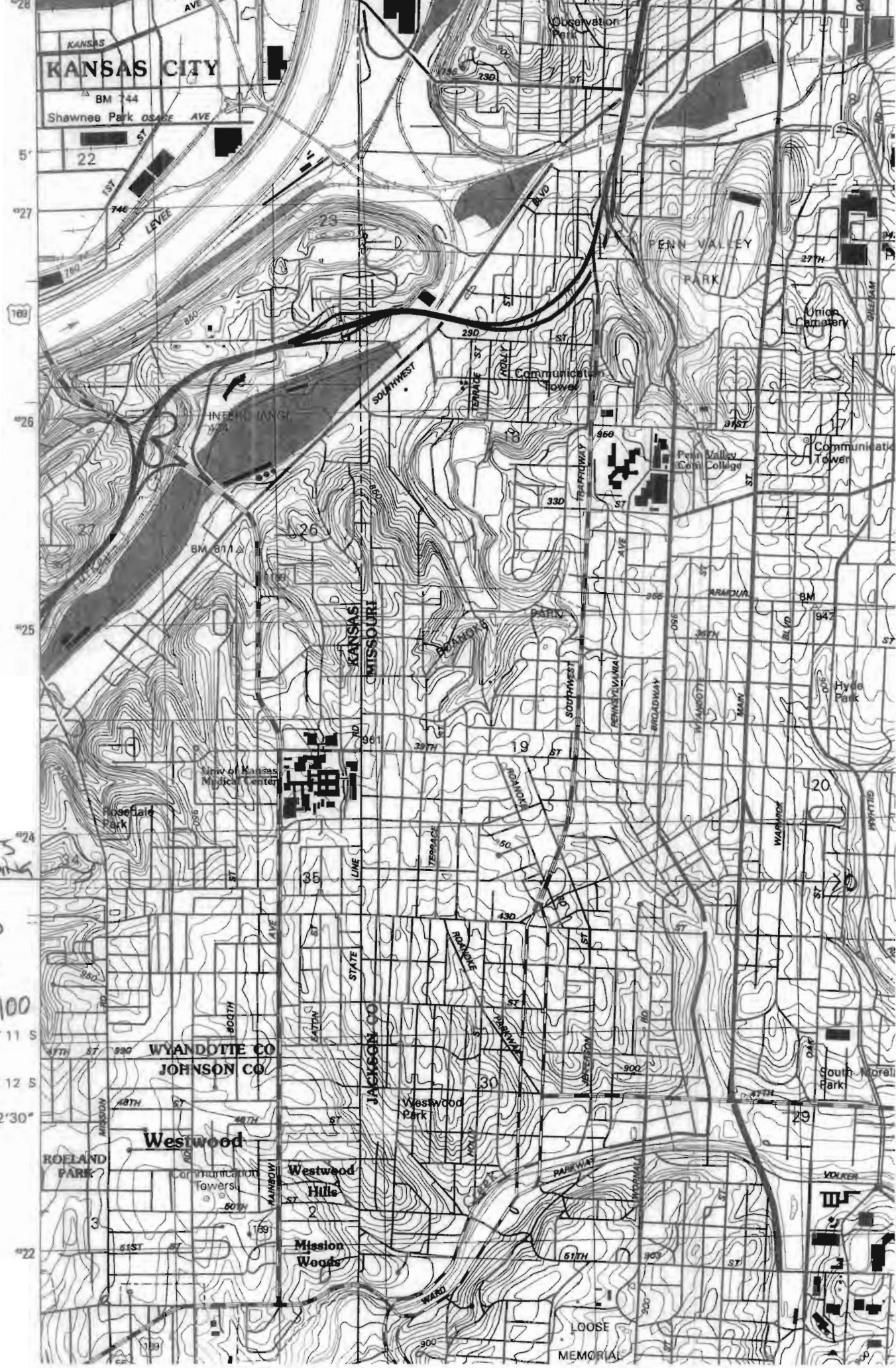
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**BON AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING  
FOURTH FLOOR PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION MAP**





# KANSAS CITY

BM 744

Shawnee Park OSAGE AVE

22

5'

27

169

26

25

24

11 S

12 S

2'30"

22

AIR APARTMENTS BUILDING

SAS City,  
KSON CO., MO

REFERENCE.

.63260/4323900

WYANDOTTE CO  
JOHNSON CO

Westwood

Westwood  
Hills

Mission  
Woods

LOOSE  
MEMORIAL



































