

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
 Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Brown Shoe Company's Homes-Take Factory

and/or common The "Mexican Hat Factory"

2. Location

street & number 1201 Russell Boulevard

— not for publication

city, town St. Louis

— vicinity of

congressional district #3--Gephardt

state Missouri

code

29

county St. Louis City

code 510

3. Classification

Category

— district

☒ building(s)

— structure

— site

— object

Ownership

— public

☒ private

— both

Public Acquisition

— in process

— being considered

Status

— occupied

— unoccupied

☒ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted

— yes: unrestricted

— no

Present Use

— agriculture

— commercial

— educational

— entertainment

— government

— industrial

— military

— museum

— park

— private residence

— religious

— scientific

— transportation

☒ other: vacant pending reuse

4. Owner of Property

name Allen Market Lane Apartments Associates

street & number 4625 Lindell Boulevard, Room 402

city, town St. Louis

— vicinity of

state MO

63108

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street & number Market Street and Tucker Boulevard

city, town St. Louis

state MO

63103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1 Soulard Architectural Survey Map

has this property been determined eligible? — yes ☒ no

date Oct. 1975; revised, Dec. 1975

— federal — state — county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63101

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Continuation sheet

Brown Shoe Company's Homes-Take Factory

Item number 6

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2. Missouri State Historical Survey

1980

Department of Natural Resources

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

state

Item Number 11

Page 1

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey

and State Contact Person

Department of Natural Resources

Office of Historic Preservation

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City

January 23, 1979

314/751-4096

Missouri 65102

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Constructed in 1904 at a cost of \$66,000, Brown Shoe Company's four story, red brick Homes-Take factory measures sixty by three hundred feet, filling half a city block. (Photo #1) Although the building is sparingly detailed, it achieves considerable visual power from an emphatic rhythm created by tall, slender windows (ten feet by three and a half feet) that are closely spaced and cover a large percentage of the total wall area. (Photos #2 & 3) Fifty-one bays on the north and south facades and eight on the east and west elevations provide an impressive demonstration of the potential of natural illumination, so important during its years of use as a shoe factory. First floor windows vary in height with the exterior grade ranging from ten feet at the east end of the building to approximately five feet, three inches at the west end. All windows have wooden sashes, stone sills and brick row-lock arches. The solidly constructed brick bearing walls are laid in common bond and have a depth of two and a half feet on the first floor, diminishing to one foot on the fourth story. Four original fire escapes are located on the north and south sides of the building. Still visible on the building today are traces of original painted lettering including Brown's 5-Star trademark. (A comparison of Photo #1 with Photo #2 indicates that virtually no exterior alterations have occurred, with the exception of the addition, in 1962, of red porcelain paneling around the south facade entrance for the offices of the Mexican-American Hat Co.)

The interior features heavy mill construction with fine tongue and groove diagonal decking. (Photo #4) When the factory opened in 1904, the plant layout embodied the most progressive design with respect to efficient production and working conditions--factors which contributed significantly to St. Louis' phenomenal rise in the shoe industry. (See Section 8.)

Architect Albert B. Groves (1866-1925) earned a distinguished reputation in St. Louis for the design of eighteen churches and numerous commercial and residential buildings. His expertise in factory design was recognized through publication in the American Architect in 1918 and by his association with Brown Shoe Company, for which he designed eleven factories in addition to the company's impressive eight story general offices--"The White House" (razed). Born in Providence, Rhode Island, the son of a mechanical and construction engineer, Groves graduated in 1888 from Cornell's School of Architecture. After working two years for the Denver firm F. E. Edbrooke and Co., the architect studied and traveled in France and Italy. In 1891, he came to St. Louis and became the junior member of Grable, Weber & Groves which evolved in 1898 to Weber & Groves. After Weber's death in 1905, Groves practiced alone.

Known locally for the versatility of his portfolio, Groves received many prestigious commissions for houses in St. Louis private places (including that of Brown Shoe Company founder, George Warren Brown) and is credited with the design of "most of the wholesale buildings on Washington Avenue from Fourteenth through Twenty-first Streets."¹ Groves also designed the Maryland Hotel (now Baltimore) in downtown St. Louis and the Kroeger Building in Laclede's Landing. (His Stock Exchange Building has been razed.) Outside Missouri Groves' important works include the First National Bank Building and Taliaferro house in Tampa, Florida, and buildings in Denver, Oklahoma and New York.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1904 Builder/Architect Weber & Groves, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The importance of the factory as a building type providing unique architectural evidence of America's cultural transformation has been increasingly recognized by scholars and preservationists in recent years. Largely through the pioneering efforts and innovative management of St. Louis' Brown Shoe Company, Missouri became the third leading state in the manufacture of shoes by the early twentieth century. As part of the Company's progressive expansion program in St. Louis (1902-1907) which created specialized factories devoted to a single line of shoes, Brown's 1904 Homes-Take factory holds a significant place in the history of shoe manufacturing as well as in the socio-industrial development patterns of the city's near southside. Designed by prominent St. Louis architects Weber & Groves, the Homes-Take plant embodied high standards for functionally efficient design, optimum working conditions and solid workmanship while maintaining an architectural integrity with the surrounding red brick working-class neighborhood through well-chosen proportions, material and scale.

When twenty year old George Warren Brown arrived in St. Louis from New York State in 1873, the city's shoe industry was in its infancy, operating as wholesale jobbers of eastern-made shoes. Brown worked five years as shipping clerk and then traveling salesman for Hamilton-Brown and Co. (a wholesale shoe firm co-founded by his brother A. D. Brown in 1872) before he resigned in 1878 to launch the first successful shoe manufacturing company in St. Louis, Bryan-Brown and Co. Beginning with only \$12,000 capital, hand tools and five skilled shoe workers imported from Rochester, New York, the company rapidly grew from sales of \$110,000 the first year to over a million dollars in 1891. By 1896, seventy-five salesmen were carrying St. Louis-made Brown shoes throughout the country.¹

The St. Louis shoe industry expanded rapidly after the turn of the century as the city leaped from ninth to third in the country by 1905,² challenging New England's hegemony. Low cost production, an innovative selling plan and assertive advertising distinguished the young and flexible St. Louis market from its eastern competitors and proved a basis for Brown Shoe Co.'s future growth. As a result of Brown's highly efficient division of labor, volume was maximized and production cost lowered through the establishment of 1) separate factories for the manufacture of different styles and grades of shoes, 2) a central cutting and supply plant, and 3) a central shipping plant.³ Specializing in women and girls shoes, Brown's 1904 Homes-Take factory thus followed the most advanced thinking in production systems, and had one of the largest yearly output capacities in the city. Large stocks of shoes ready for shipment and an expeditious distributing system gave St. Louis another profitable advantage over New England;⁴ Brown Shoe's claim: "Two Million Dollar stock for 'At Once' Shipment...Received Before Noon--Shipped Before Night" captured new markets and promoted a very successful mail order business across the country.⁵

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THE "MEXICAN HAT FACTORY" (ST. LOUIS)

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PAGE 1

Factory location and design, in conjunction with labor conditions, also figured prominently in the economics of manufacturing that drove St. Louis forward. The city's high percentage of skilled German immigrants had been an important determinant in the initial location of shoe manufacturing⁶ and continued to be an excellent labor force that contrasted sharply with labor problems in Massachusetts.⁷ Brown's Homes-Take factory availed itself of this desirable work force by strategically locating in the heart of Soulard, one of St. Louis' predominately German, nineteenth century neighborhoods. Promoted as "one of the best lighted and arranged factories in the country," the Homes-Take plant fulfilled demands of the time for efficient new factories designed especially for shoe production while providing optimum safety, health and sanitation conditions for employees. In view of Missouri's deficient labor protection laws and inadequate factory inspection system in the early twentieth century,⁸ it is to Brown Shoe's credit that such exemplary standards in ventilation, light, fire safety and toilet facilities were incorporated in their Homes-Take plant. Well sited on a corner and featuring a high frequency of windows, the building provided maximum natural illumination and cross ventilation. The internal arrangement allowed ample space for employees since machinery and operatives occupied one-half the width of the outside bays (the length of the outside walls thus determined the number of operatives each floor was equipped with)⁹ and separate toilets and rest rooms¹⁰ for male and female workers. Lunch room facilities were located in the basement.

The 1904 St. Louis World's Fair brought acclaim to Brown Shoe when the company was awarded a double grand prize for its participation in a model shoe factory exhibit.¹¹ At the fair, Brown introduced a precedent-setting advertising technique by purchasing the rights for "Buster Brown", a recently-created newspaper comic character whose name was identical to Brown's line of children's shoes. The enthusiastic reception of "Buster Brown" at the Fair led to an early use of national advertising which promoted brand identity.¹² Various methods of aggressive advertising aimed at assisting retailers soon became an effective and distinctive feature of Brown Shoe and other St. Louis shoe manufacturers who not only chanted the quality of their products, but promoted their superior factories, organization and salesmen.

Competition became keen as new companies (frequently founded by salesmen of older firms) mushroomed in St. Louis between 1890 and World War I. While consolidation and merger offered a solution for survival of many manufactures, Brown Shoe remained independent and held its own as the third largest shoe company in the country. After World War I a new style factor emerged in women's shoes when skirts shortened and attention was directed to the feet. Again St. Louis outdistanced tradition-bound New England by responding to consumers' desires

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with a full line of lightweight women's novelty shoes.¹³ The Homes-Take plant, which had begun production in 1904 with a medium-priced line of women's dress shoes, developed along with the volatile fashion-conscious market in which St. Louis became a leader.

By 1919, shoe manufacturing was the largest single item in the city's annual business. Washington Avenue, home of Brown's central offices and distribution, had gained a reputation as "Shoe Street, U.S.A.", claiming more shoe trading than any street in the world.¹⁴ Significantly, the commercial development of much of upper Washington Avenue can be attributed to the efforts of George Warren Brown and architect A. B. Groves.¹⁵

The Brown factory continued to offer neighborhood families convenient and desirable employment through the 1930's.¹⁶ Just before Homes-Take was closed and relocated outside St. Louis, Brown Shoe again revolutionized the shoe industry by initiating a new kind of marketing. Instead of selling all shoes the company manufactured, the salesmen were given a single brand that was advertised nationally and placed directly under a sales manager. The new concept proved successful and soon other companies followed Brown's lead.¹⁷

The building's next tenants (beginning in 1954), International Hat Co. and its subsidiary the Mexican-American Hat Co., also had an early history of manufacturing in St. Louis. Founded in 1917 and 1910 respectively, both companies began as manufacturers of farmers', straw harvest hats and later expanded their lines. The former shoe factory served as a warehouse for International Hat and general offices for Mexican-American Hat until 1976¹⁸ when ownership passed to the Junior Achievement of the Mississippi Valley.

Brown's Homes-Take factory's sound structural system, fine craftsmanship, quality of space and convenient access to the city center make it a prime candidate for adaptive re-use. The present owners, Allen Market Lane Apartment Associates have begun work on the building's conversion to a one hundred unit housing project for the elderly. For many area residents, the old factory has strong historical associations and identity as a neighborhood landmark. For decision makers in the city, the anticipated success of this project should encourage the retention and re-use of St. Louis' under-utilized or abandoned historic industrial architecture.

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F O O T N O T E S

¹Brown Group, Inc., The First Hundred Years (St. Louis: Brown Group, Inc., [1978]), pp. 1-10.

²David Rodnick, "The Economic Development of St. Louis and the Surrounding Area: 1764-1914" St. Louis, 1944. Missouri Historical Society Collections. (Mimeographed.)

³I. H. Sawyer, "How St. Louis Became the Greatest Shoe Center," Shoe and Leather Gazette, 12 January 1910, pp. 29-30.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Brown Shoe Co. advertisements in Shoe and Leather Gazette, 1909-1910.

⁶Edgar M. Hoover, Jr., Location Theory and the Shoe and Leather Industries (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), pp. 223-225.

⁷Herbert J. Vogt, "Boot and Shoe Industry of St. Louis" (M.A. Thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, 1929), pp. 65-68.

⁸Biennial Report of the State Factory Inspector (Jefferson City, MO: [State of Missouri], 1905).

Report of the State Factory Inspector (Jefferson City, MO: [State of Missouri], 1913).

⁹A. B. Groves, architect, "Shoe Factory at Litchfield, Illinois," American Architect, 27 February, 1918, p. 259.

¹⁰Interview with Mrs. Thelma Hemmen, former Homes-Take Factory employee, St. Louis, Missouri, May, 1980.

¹¹Brown Group, Inc., p. 20.

¹²"Unusual Advertising Plan," Shoe and Leather Gazette, 24 November 1909, n.p.

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¹³Maxine Faye Fendelman, "Saint Louis Shoe Manufacturing" (M.A. thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1947), pp. 49-51.

¹⁴St. Louis Chamber of Commerce Bulletin 1 (January, 1919).

¹⁵Walter B. Stevens, Centennial History of Missouri, 5 vols. (St. Louis: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921), Vol. 3, p. 23 and Vol. 5, p. 543.

¹⁶Hemmen interview.

¹⁷Brown Group, Inc. pp. 34-36.

¹⁸Interview with Marvin B. Leibach, Secretary/Treasurer, International Hat Co., St. Louis, Missouri, June, 1980.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .41 acres

Quadrangle name Cahokia, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	5
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7	4	2	9	4	0
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4	2	7	6	7	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The "Mexican Hat Factory" is located on the southern half of City Block 679 and is bounded on the north by an alley of said City Block, the east by South 12th Street, the south by Russell Boulevard and the west by South 13th Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary M. Stiritz, Research Associate

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 6/24/80

street & number 611 Olive Street, Suite 2187 telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO 63101

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Fred A. Lafser, Director, Department Natural Resources And
title State Historic Preservation Officer date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Allen, Frederick. The Shoe Industry. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922.

Biennial Report of the State Factory Inspector. Jefferson City, MO: [State of Missouri], 1905.

Brown Group, Inc. The First Hundred Years. St. Louis: Brown Group, Inc., [1978].

"Bush Traces Growth of Shoe Industry That Leads World." The Drygoodsman 25 (28 October 1922).

The Drygoodsman and General Merchant St. Louis Factory Number (28 August 1909).

Fendelman, Maxine Faye. "Saint Louis Shoe Manufacturing." M.A. thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1947.

Groves, A. B., architect. "Shoe Factory at Litchfield, Illinois." American Architect, 27 February 1918, pp. 259-260.

Hemmen, Mrs. Thelma. Former Homes-Take Factory employee, St. Louis, Missouri. Interviews, May and June 1980.

Hoover, Edgar M., Jr. Location Theory and the Shoe and Leather Industries. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937.

Leibach, Marvin B. Secretary/Treasurer, International Hat Co., St. Louis, Missouri. Interview, June, 1980.

Meakin, Budgett. Model Factories and Villages: Ideal Conditions of Labour and Housing. Philadelphia: Geo. W. Jacobs & Co., 1905.

Report of the State Factory Inspector. Jefferson City, MO: [State of Missouri], 1913.

Rodnick, David. "The Economic Development of St. Louis and the Surrounding Area: 1764-1914." St. Louis, 1944. Missouri Historical Society collections. (Mimeographed.)

"St. Louis Biggest Shoe Center in World Says Rand." St. Louis Star, 1 July 1921, p. 4.

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St. Louis Chamber of Commerce Bulletin 1 (January, 1919).

"The St. Louis Idea." Shoe and Leather Gazette, 24 November 1909.

Sawyer, I. H. "How St. Louis Became the Greatest Shoe Center." Shoe and Leather Gazette, 12 January 1910, pp. 29-30.

Shoe and Leather Gazette, advertisements for Brown Shoe Co., 1909-1910.

Stevens, Walter B. Centennial History of Missouri. 5 vols. St. Louis: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921.

Vogt, Herbert J. "Boot and Shoe Industry of Saint Louis." M.A. thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1929.

70 18 MI. TO INTERSTATE
2961 11 NW
(GRANITE CITY)

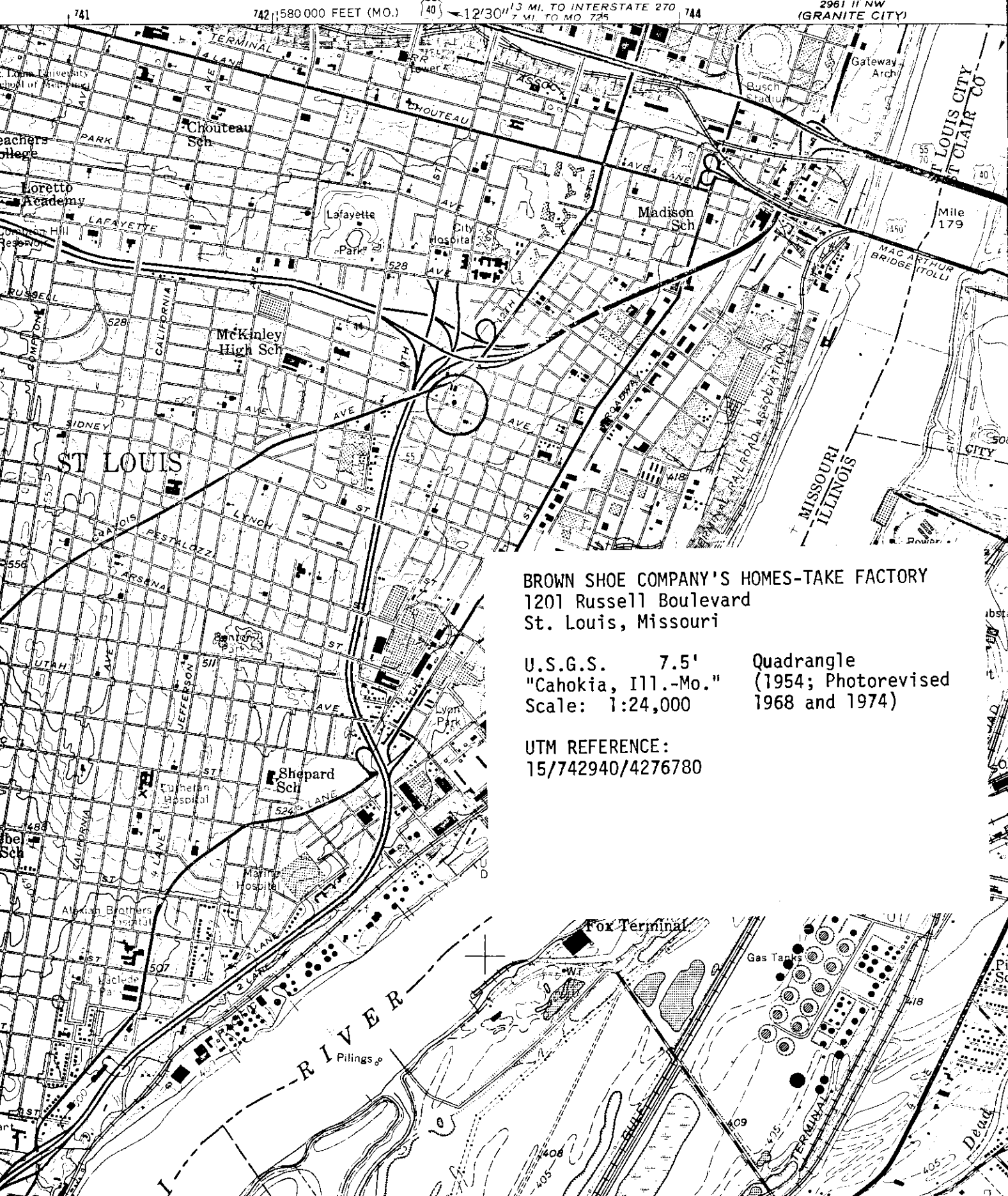


Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Brown Shoe Company's Homes-Take Factory**

City or Vicinity: **St. Louis [Independent City]**

County: **St. Louis [Independent City]** State: **MO**

Photographer: **SRT Architects/Planners**

Date

Photographed: **Mar 1980**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 4. S and E facades, looking NW.

2 of 4. N façade, looking W.

3 of 4. Interior detail showing mill construction.

4 of 4. Early view of S and E facades, looking NW.









Brown Shoe Company