

SITE FILE COPY

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Missouri	
COUNTY: Jackson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Alexander Majors House
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 8145 State Line Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Kansas City			
STATE Missouri	CODE 64114	COUNTY: Jackson	CODE 095

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comments not in use

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Miss Louisa P. Johnston			
STREET AND NUMBER: 8145 State Line Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Kansas City	STATE: Missouri	CODE 64114	CODE 24

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of Recorder of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: 217 North Main			
CITY OR TOWN: Kansas City	STATE: Missouri	CODE 64114	CODE 24

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1963 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: State Historical Society of Missouri			
STREET AND NUMBER: Corner, Hitt and Lowry streets			
CITY OR TOWN: Columbia	STATE: Missouri	CODE 65201	CODE 24

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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2.

ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE

The lot on which the house is situated crosses the Missouri-Kansas border. The state line passes approximately 16 feet in front of the house proper which is contained entirely within the State of Missouri. (Refer to Site Plan.) The lot is "L" shaped with its widest frontage, 250 feet, on State Line Road in Johnson County Kansas. The southern boundary of the property extends 269.17 feet from State Line Road to Wyoming Street. The western 94.87 feet of this length are in Leawood, (Johnson County) Kansas and the eastern 174.30 feet of this length are in Kansas City, (Jackson County) Missouri. The northern boundary of the property proceeds 135.32 feet east from State Line Road, thence 110 feet south, thence 132.92 feet east to Wyoming Street. The western 85.10 feet of this boundary is in Leawood, (Johnson County) Kansas and the remainder of the boundary falls within Kansas City, (Jackson County) Missouri. Missouri's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places will include only that portion of the property located within the State of Missouri, but notification of this nomination will be given to the Kansas State Liaison Officer for P.L. 89-665 with the recommendation that Kansas nominate the adjacent portion of the property located within the State of Kansas.

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6.

ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE

Missouri State Historical Survey

(state)

1969

Missouri State Park Board

P.O. Box 176

1204 Jefferson Building

Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Code: 24

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Alexander Majors House in Kansas City, Missouri is a two story wood frame residence constructed in 1856 and designed in the Classic Revival style with an unusual "T" shaped floor plan. The front facade is approximately 55 feet wide, and the depth of the house is 71' 6". The structure faces west.

Regular maintainance on the house since 1930 has prevented deterioration; protective and supporting elements of the building as well as detailing and trim are presently in sound condition. Original doors, window frames, trim, exterior siding, cornices and the major portion of the interior floors are intact. All framing and foundation work on the original portion of the house survive.

The extensions of the fabric of the house include: 1) an addition to the rear "T" protruding from approximately the mid-point of the south side of the "T" and oriented north and south; 2) two side porches, one on the south constructed between the front main block and the south addition to the "T," and a north porch spanning the western two-thirds of the north wall of the "T;" 3) a rear porch at the east end of the "T."

EXTERIOR

The foundation is of regularly coursed ashlar masonry.

The exterior surface of the wood frame upright walls is sheathed in clapboarding painted white.

The front (west) main block has a ridge roof with north and south gable end walls. The ridge roof of the rear (east) two story "T" extension intersects the roof of the front main block at its midpoint. The ridge of this east-west roof continues toward the front of the house in a central front gable or pediment.

The Facade

The front facade is symmetrically arranged with two windows on each floor flanking the central porch area. The front entablature passes unbroken above the front porch. The central front porch is notable in that it is recessed and forms a loggia on the second floor. The recessed front entrance porch on the first floor was walled-in after 1925 making the presently existing front doorway flush with the west wall of the house. This doorway is not sheltered by a porch roof.

The second story porch has an ornate balustrade formed by cut wooden members forming a series of ovals banded by moulding course around the

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ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE

on the east wall of the front main block opening into the north parlor. The three square columns that support the porch roof are finished more simply than those on the west (front) facade.

The east (rear) porch spans the southern three-quarters of the east wall of the "T." This porch is supported by two square columns similar to those on the north porch. The roof is flat and accessible through a second floor door at the south end of the east wall. The second floor deck lacks a balustrade.

A double-leafed cellar door is located just north of the east porch. This entrance gives access to the cellar under the easternmost room of the "T."

Although the east gable end wall of the "T" was constructed after 1903, the arrangement and finish of this wall closely follows that of the north and south gable end walls of the front main block.

Chimneys in the "T" were incorporated into the partition walls which divide the length of the "T" into thirds on the interior.

INTERIOR

Cellar

The original cellar was under the middle third of the "T." This area was expanded after 1903 to include also the eastern third of the "T."

First and Second Floors

The interior of the first and second floors was originally divided into three sections of approximately equal size in the front main block. The "T" originally contained a stair hall and two chambers (the dining room and lean-to kitchen) of approximately equal size on the first floor, and a stair hall and one chamber on the second floor.

The interior ceiling height is 9'4".

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Alterations

Ownership of the Majors House was transferred to Samuel and William Poteet in 1859. The Poteets held the property until 1903 when it was purchased by the Ruhl family who carried out numerous alterations to the house. In 1925-1930 the house was owned by School District #57 in Jackson County. Use of the house as a school building prompted additional alterations especially to the interior. By 1930, date of acquisition by the present owner, Miss Louisa P. Johnston, the house had been seriously vandalized. Miss Johnston has made numerous repairs to the house, especially on the exterior.

Under the ownership of the Ruhls after 1903 the dining room and master bedroom above on the second floor were enlarged by the addition of a southern extension to the "T," previously described. The size of the rooms was increased from 15 x 17 feet to 15 x 27 feet. This extension terminates in a bay.

The ca. 1903 eastern addition to the "T" includes a kitchen on the first floor and an area of the same size on the second floor divided into two rooms with access to the first floor by a back stairway at the east end of the "T."

Additional alterations to the interior dating from the ca. 1903 remodeling include: 1) modifications to the main stairway; 2) remodeling of the central front fireplace of the first floor, in which the original wooden mantel was removed and replaced with stone; 3) removal of the kitchen cooking fireplace, dining room fireplace and master bedroom fireplace above.

Other alterations of less certain date include: 1) installation of a bathroom at the north end of the second floor hall; 2) addition of closets to the northern three-quarters of the length of the western wall of the master bedroom; 3) moving of the west entrance doorway to this bedroom from the northern section of the west wall to the southern end of the wall.

During the time that the building was in use as a school, 1925 to 1930, the partition walls between the three chambers of the first floor of the front section, were removed to form a single continuous space. The wooden "T" braces were inserted to carry

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midpoint of each upright shaft. The balustrade is divided into three sections by two square wooden columns resting on bases rising to the height of the railing. These columns are chamfered and have a single line of fluting centered on each of the four faces. Matching pilasters are attached to the walls of the house at either end of the balustrade. The pediment above is outlined with mouldings, but otherwise plain.

Two windows flanking the modified front entranceway were added when the first floor porch was walled in. The windows of the front main block and throughout the house have six over six light double-hung sash.

Gable End Walls

Both north and south gable end walls have a partial return of the entablature. First and second story windows were cut in these originally blank walls soon after 1903. The windows are located west of the chimney stack on the south gable end and east of the chimney stack on the north gable end.

The brick chimneys are centered atop the gables and contained within the framing of the house. They are in need of minor repairs and tuckpointing.

"T" Extension

The rear (east) "T" originally had a lean-to kitchen at its east end. After 1903 this kitchen was removed and replaced with a cellar and two full stories above. (Louisa P. Johnson, information to the Missouri State Historical Survey and Planning Office, August 2, 1969.)

At about the same time the original shed roof of the south porch was converted to a deck with access through an original second floor window on the east wall of the front main block converted to a door. A simple wooden balustrade rims the deck.

The north porch also has a deck roof, but the second story balustrade is presently missing. This porch provides weather protection for a side door on the north wall of the "T" and a door

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the load of the partition walls and roof above. The kitchen was converted to toilets and a teachers' room, and one north and one south window in this room were converted to doorways.

Finish

The walls are plastered. Trim is of white pine with a rather ornate profile. (See Second Floor Plan.) The mouldings are shouldered at the lintels of windows and doorways. Original fireplace mantles are plain but were appropriately designed with classic elements in the pilasters to either side of the firebox, and the cornice. Floors are of hard pine boards uniformly 5½ inches wide.

The measurements of the doors average 2'8". The doors have four raised-center panels.

Outbuildings and grounds

Original outbuildings constructed with the house do not survive. A barn was located approximately 100 feet southeast of the house, and a smoke house was located approximately 40 feet north of the house.

The locations of these buildings are indicated on the Site Plan. Presently existing site features include a well and a cistern just south of the house, a recent shed 20 feet north of the house, and a cottage 60 feet north of the house. The original brick front entrance walk was grassed over at the time of acquisition by the present owner in 1930. When the grass was removed, the exposed bricks deteriorated badly. An original drive which gave access to the barn area is clearly visible south of the house.

Except where otherwise noted this summary description of the physical appearance of the building is based on data included in the field report by architectural consultant, Kenneth E. Coombs, A.I.A., received October, 1969. The report was contracted by the Missouri State Park Board and is filed at its central office, P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building, Jefferson City, Missouri 65201.

8. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)		1856 - 1858	
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> losophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> itarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>The Alexander Majors House is primarily significant as a historic site. The house and grounds served as one of the outfitting bases for the Russell, Majors and Waddell freighting firm, as well as the home of Alexander Majors, the field coordinator for the company. The house has additional significance as a notable example of Classic Revival residential architecture built in light wood frame construction. It is Kansas City's third oldest house, and the oldest structure of any kind in the area in light wood frame construction. (Kenneth E. Coombs, A.I.A., Architectural Consultant Field Report, received October 1969.)</p> <p>In 1854, William H. Russell and William B. Waddell, both merchants from Lexington, Missouri, joined with Majors in an attempt to gain yearly contracts let by the United States government to supply newly constructed forts and army posts in Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. Majors, an experienced dealer in the Santa Fe Trade, undoubtedly provided the freighting equipment, while Waddell and Russell contributed most of the financial backing. (Raymond W. and Mary Lund Settle, <u>War Drums and Wagon Wheels, The Story of Russell, Majors and Waddell</u>, 1966, p. 42.)</p> <p>In 1855 the firm signed the first of a series of government contracts which gave them a virtual monopoly of the army freighting business in the west and southwest. (Settle, 1966, pp. 31-42.) In addition to the Kansas City base of operations, the firm established similar headquarters in Leavenworth, Kansas and later Nebraska City, Nebraska. The company's business transactions, which averaged more than 2 million dollars a year, greatly stimulated the banking interests of Kansas City, St. Joseph, Lexington and other Missouri towns. (Paul Haskins, "Seek to Preserve Home of Giant of Area History," <u>Kansas City Star</u>, July 19, 1968, section C, p. 2.)</p> <p>Alexander Majors built the presently standing house in 1856. (Kenneth E. Coombs, A.I.A. Architectural Consultant Field Report, received October 1969.) It served as his residence until 1858 when he and his family moved to Nebraska City, Nebraska, which in that year was selected as the starting point for the wagon trains bound for army posts</p>			

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in Utah. In his memoirs, Majors recalled ". . . I took charge of the new station and moved my family from my farm, nine miles south of Kansas City, Missouri to Nebraska City. . . ." (Alexander Majors, Seventy Years on the Frontier, 1893, p. 77.)

The loading of wagon trains bound for trade in the southwest took place in the area just west of the Majors' house. (Interview with Miss Louisa P. Johnston, present owner, November 21, 1969.) Goods were hauled to the site from the Missouri River steamboat docks at Westport Landing, the former name for Kansas City. Majors supervised this operation and occasionally accompanied the trains into the field. His strict supervision of the wagon trains was in a large part responsible for the success of the firm. Called the "Christian Bullwacker," Majors insisted that his employees sign an oath which forbid the use of liquor, profanity or cruelty to the animals on his wagon trains. This practice insured a longer more productive life for his mule and oxen teams. In 1858, at the height of the company's operations, Majors supervised a force of 3,500 wagons, 4,000 men and 40,000 oxen. (Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, A History of the American Frontier, 1967, p. 638.)

A debt contracted by the firm in 1857 while hauling supplies to the United States Army during the Mormon hostilities in Utah, began the company's financial decline. Two attempts to revitalise the firm's standing, the Central Overland Stage Coach and the Pony Express, were unsuccessful and caused a more rapid decline of the company's finances. In 1861 the partners were forced to sell their interests and declare bankruptcy. ("The Pony Express," Museum Graphic, 1959.)

Alexander Majors continued to freight goods on an individual basis until 1866 when the railroad industry began to overshadow the slower, less efficient wagon trains. Majors, one of Kansas City's first millionaires, died penniless in Chicago in 1900.

The house is a unique architectural example in the Kansas City area for its "T" plan and the recessed front porch. The more prevalent configuration for similar houses of the period in the area was an "L" plan with projecting front porch. The house has further distinction as an architectural example because of its

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ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE

construction in light wood frame rather than the brick construction more common to the Kansas City area. The interior arrangement with circulation through connection rooms rather than interior hallways or an exterior gallery on the rear wing, also sets the house apart from other contemporary examples in the area. The building is one of the nine remaining structures in Kansas City pre-dating the Civil War.

The present owner, Louisa P. Johnston, who purchased the house in 1930, is the great-granddaughter of Alexander Majors. (Louisa P. Johnston, Information in a letter to the Missouri State Historical Survey and Planning Office, August 2, 1969.)

The site is currently threatened by its changing surroundings. Kansas City has grown out to include this originally rural area, and proposed zoning legislation would allow commercial development of the area. According to Kenneth E. Coombs, City Architect for Kansas City, "Economic pressures created thereby would soon force the sale and destruction of the building." (Coombs, October, 1969.)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Billington, Ray Allen. Westward Expansion, A History of the American Frontier. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967.
2. Haskins, Paul. "Seek to Preserve Home of Giant of Area History," Kansas City Star, June 19, 1968.
3. Majors, Alexander. Seventy Years on the Frontier, Alexander Majors' Memoirs of a Lifetime on the Border. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1893.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38 °	58 ' 45 "	94 ° 36 ' 28 "
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than ten

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Kansas	15	Johnson	091
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Martha L. Kusiak, Research Historian		
ORGANIZATION	Missouri State Park Board State Historical Survey and Planning Office	DATE January 27, 1970
STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Jefferson City	Missouri 65101	24

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name Joseph Jaeger, Jr.

Title Director, Missouri State Park Board, and Missouri State Liaison Officer

Date _____

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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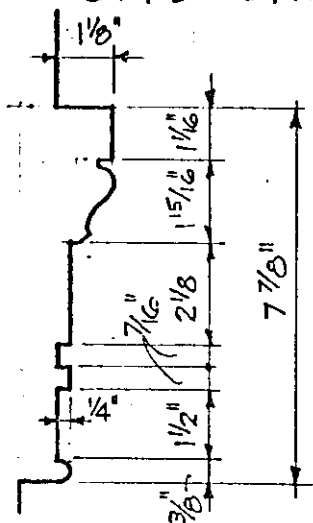
9.

ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE

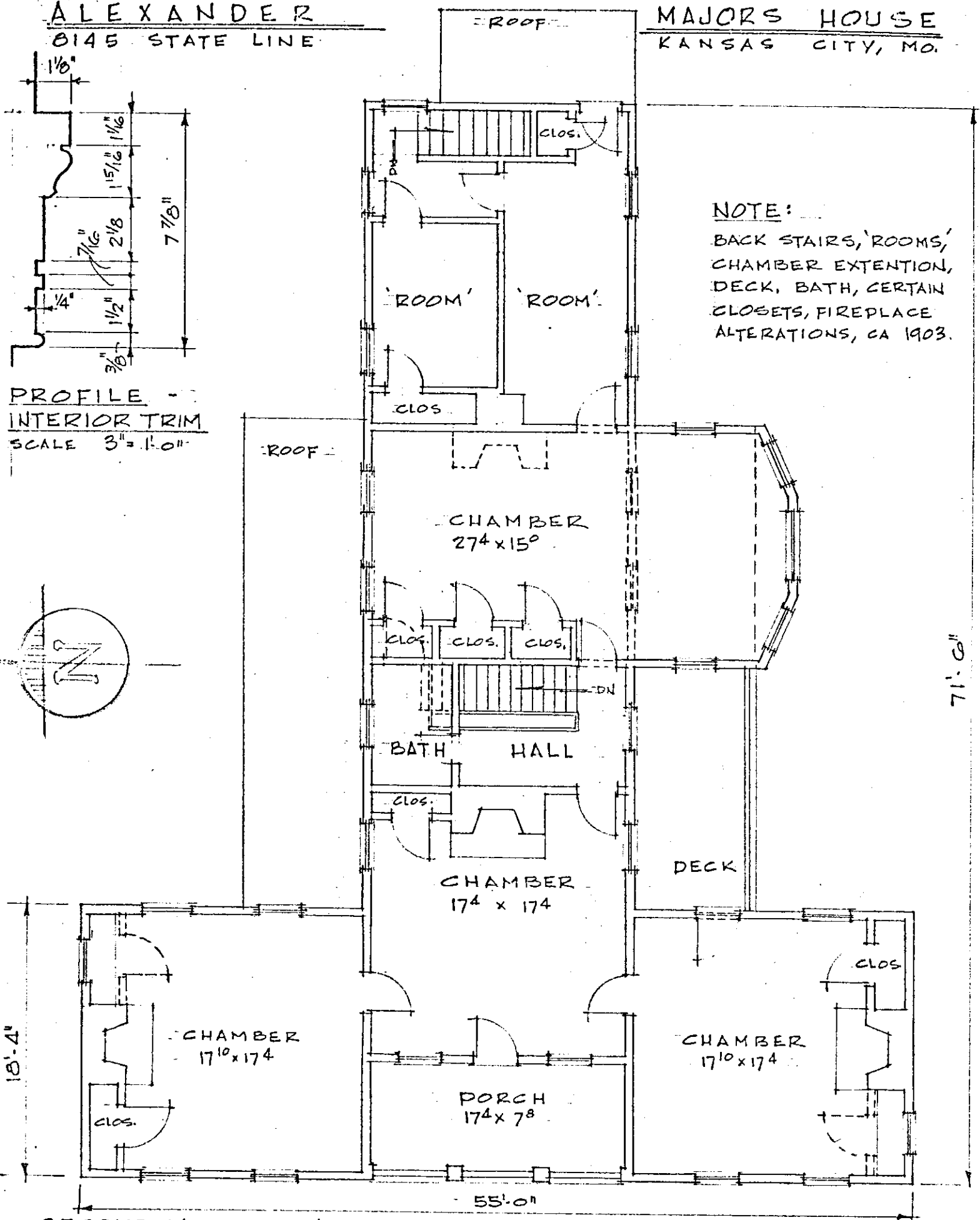
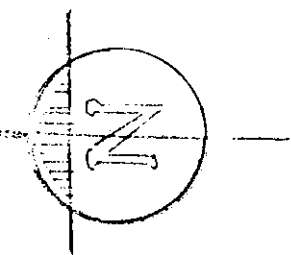
4. Meyers, Duane. The Heritage of Missouri - A History.
St. Louis: State Publishing Co., 1965.
5. Reynolds, Don L. "Grand Old Gentlemen of the Pony Express,"
Museum Graphic, 21:3-6, Spring, 1969.
6. Settle, Raymond W. and Mary Lund. War Drums and Wagon Wheels,
The Story of Russell, Majors and Waddell. Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1966, pp. 1-67.
7. State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri,
Historic Sites File. Ref. Jackson County.
8. Swearington, Martha. "Bible Ruled Man Who Ran Pony Express,"
Kansas City Star, April 1, 1960.
9. "The Pony Express," Museum Graphic, Centennial Edition, 1959.
10. Van Brunt, Henry. "Display at Old Alexander Majors Home Calls
Attention to Transportation Epic," Kansas City Star,
July 1, 1950.

0145 STATE LINE

KANSAS CITY, MO.



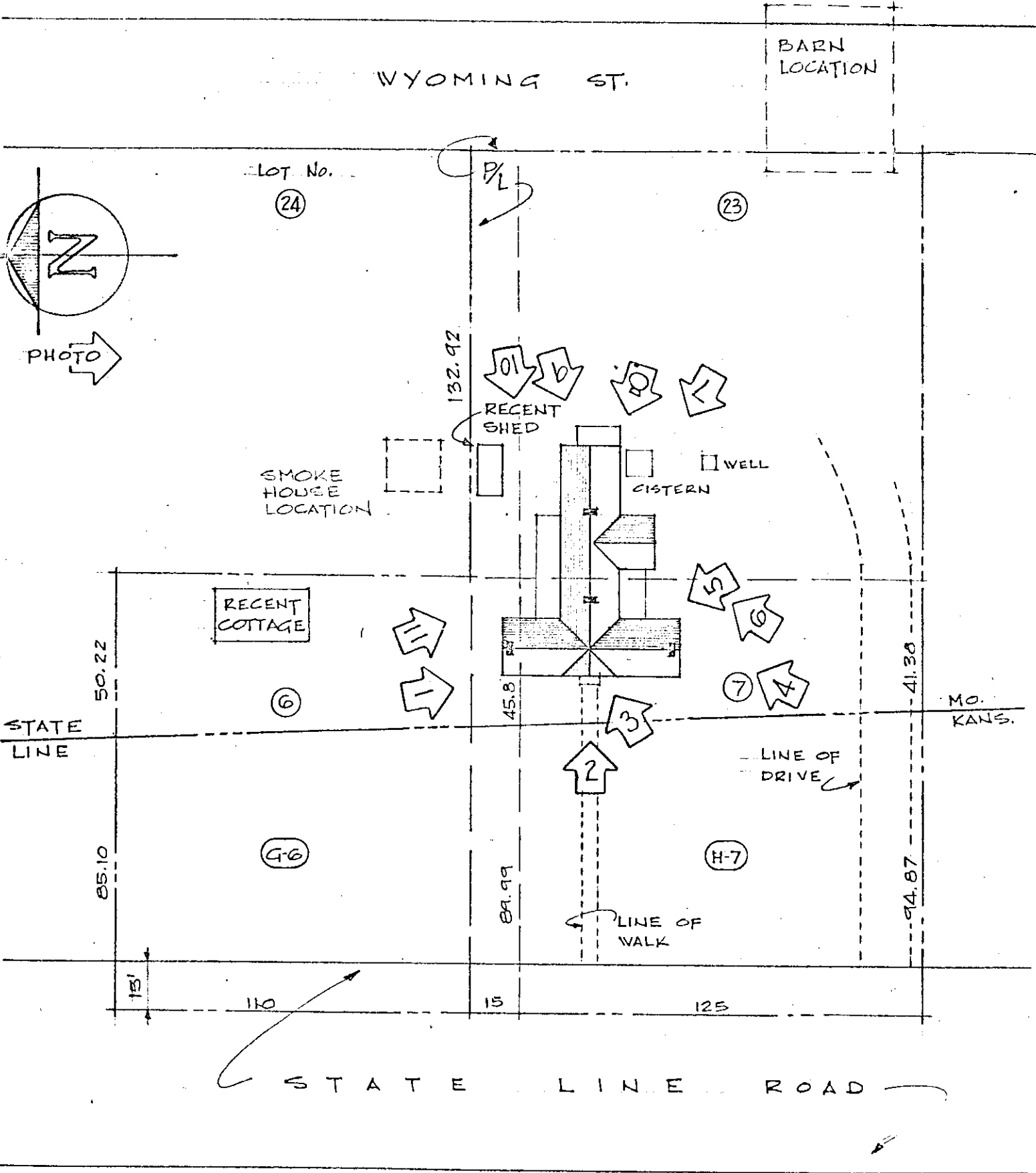
PROFILE -
INTERIOR TRIM
SCALE 3" = 1'-0"



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

K E COMBES AIA

ALEXANDER MAJORS HOUSE
8145 STATE LINE ROAD • KANSAS CITY, MO.



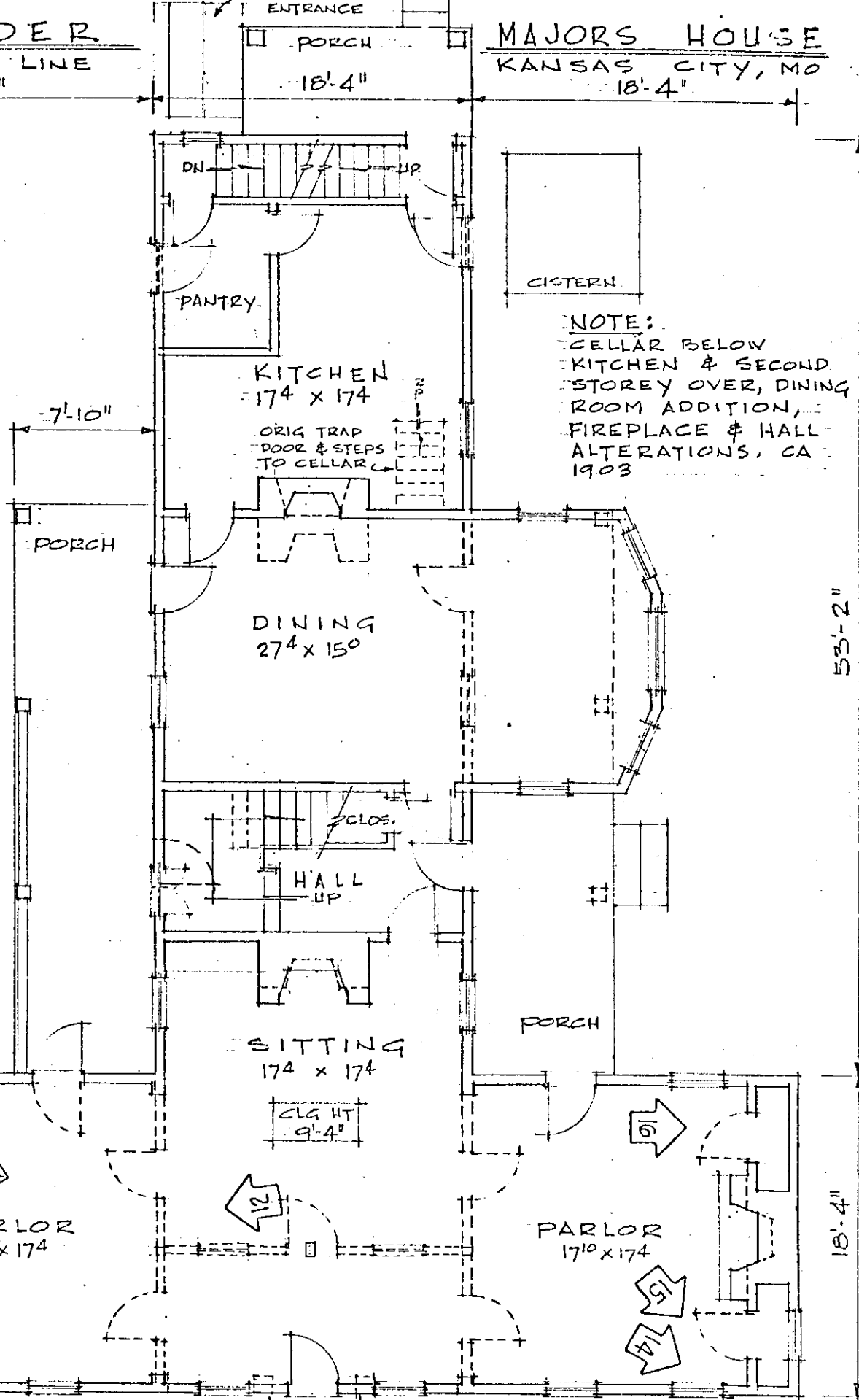
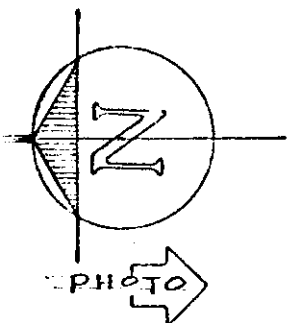
SITE PLAN
SCALE - 1" = 40'-0"

GARDEN
LOCATION

K.E. COOMBS AIA

ALEXANDER
8145 STATE LINE

MAJORS HOUSE
KANSAS CITY, MO



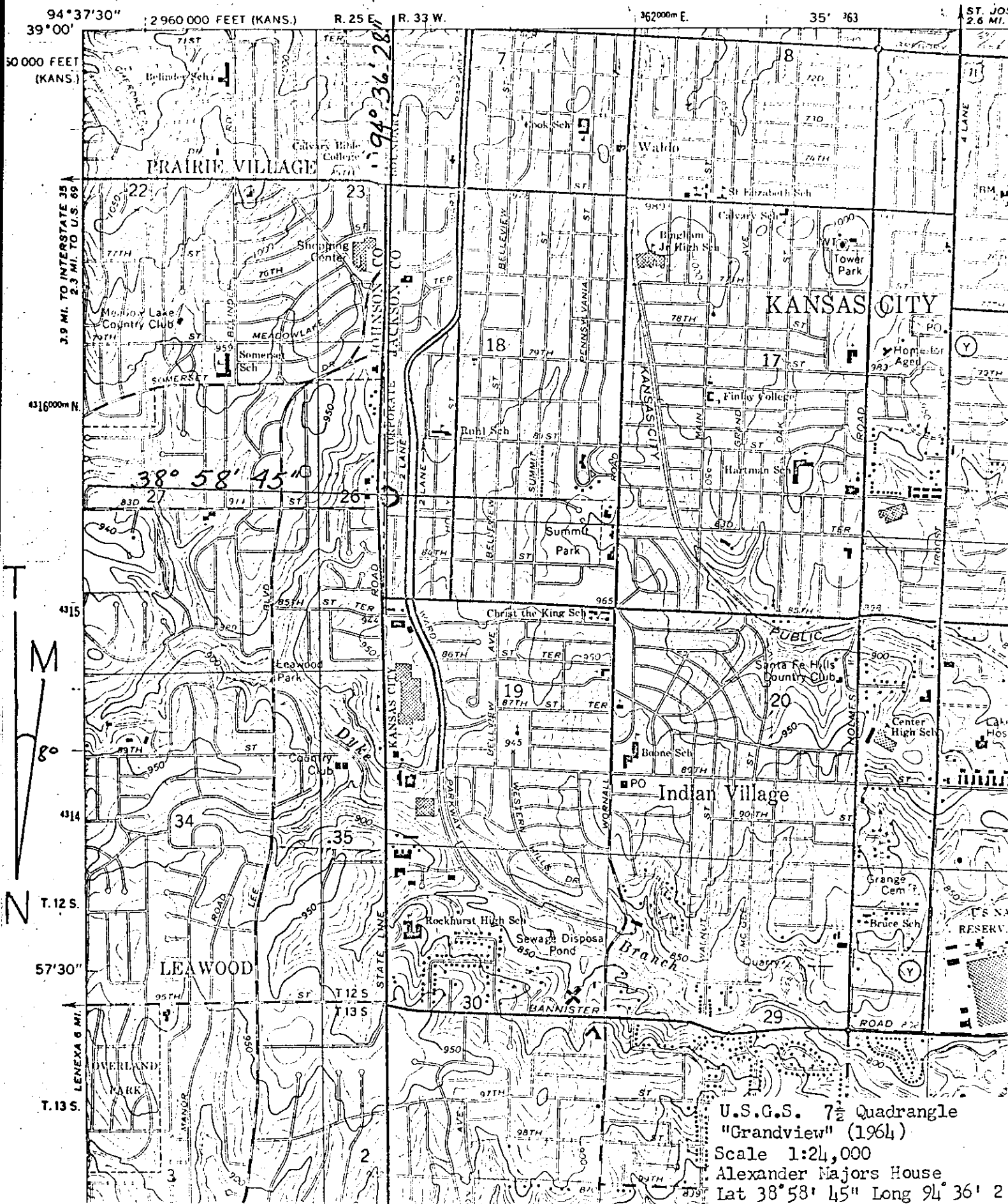
NOTE:
CELLAR BELOW
KITCHEN & SECOND
STOREY OVER, DINING
ROOM ADDITION,
FIREPLACE & HALL
ALTERATIONS, CA
1903

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

K. E. COOMBS AIA

1962 11 SW
LAWNEE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



U.S.G.S. 7 1/2 Quadrangle
"Grandview" (1964)
Scale 1:24,000
Alexander Majors House
Lat 38° 58' 45" Long 94° 36' 2

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Majors, Alexander, House**
City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**
County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**
Photographer: **Kenneth E. Coombs and Martha Kusiak**
Date
Photographed: **Oct. and Nov., 1969**

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

- 1 of 5. From west, view to the east. Detail of the front (west) façade second floor open loggia. The ornate balustrade is divided into three sections by two square wooden columns resting on bases rising to the height of the railing. The pediment is outlined with mouldings.
- 2 of 5. Interior detail of typical finish. Walls are plastered; floorboard and window framing mouldings and sills are broad and sufficiently complex to modulate the otherwise unornamented simplicity of the chamber.
- 3 of 5. From north to south, interior view of typical shouldered lintel mouldings. This example is on the built-in closet east of the first floor south parlor fireplace.
- 4 of 5. From southwest, view to the northeast. Front (west) façade at left, south gable end wall of front main block at center, and south wall of rear "T" extension at right. South addition to the rear "T" is visible projecting south from the south wall of the "T".
- 5 of 5. From west, view to the east. View of the front (west) façade. Two double-hung windows on each floor flank the central recessed porch. Entablature passes unbroken above the porch area. First floor of the porch has been walled in altering the original character of this façade.









