

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Rockwood Court Apartments

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 330 West Lockwood [n/a] not for publication

city or town Webster Groves [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Saint Louis County code 189 zip code 63119

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally
[] statewide [X] locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Mark A. Miles

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

16 FEB, 2006

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.

[] removed from the
National Register

[] other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

Rockwood Court Apartments
Saint Louis County, Missouri

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

1 buildings
 _____ sites
 _____ structures
 _____ objects
 1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH and 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
 Tudor Revival

Materials

foundation Concrete
 walls Brick
 roof Asphalt
 other Limestone

Narrative Description

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

**Rockwood Court Apartments
Saint Louis County, Missouri**

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ **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

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.

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Periods of Significance

1926-1928

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Widmer Engineering Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic 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: _____

Rockwood Court Apartments
Saint Louis County, Missouri**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property less than 1 acre**UTM References**A. Zone Easting Northing
15 729560 4274925

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Karen Bode Baxter, Sarah Bularzik, Mandy K. Ford, Timothy P. Maloneyorganization Karen Bode Baxter, Historic Consultant date February 9, 2006street & number 5811 Delor telephone (314)-353-0593city or town Saint Louis state MO zip code 63109**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

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

name Rockwood Court Apartments, L.L.C. c/o Lamar Ochsstreet & number 2221 Rebecca Lynn Court telephone (314) 298-5153city or town Chesterfield state MO zip code 63017

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 **Rockwood Court Apartments**
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Description

SUMMARY

The Rockwood Court Apartments at 330 W. Lockwood in Webster Groves, St. Louis County, Missouri, is positioned on the southeast corner of the intersection of Lockwood Avenue and Rock Hill Road, both major streets in St. Louis County and former streetcar lines. Constructed in 1928, the three-story (with raised basement), red brick apartment building is located just west of the Old Webster Historic District (NR listed 8/4/04). From Lockwood, the thirty-three unit, U-shaped apartment building could almost be mistaken for a campus building such as a college dormitory. Rockwood Court is considered a fireproof design, with poured concrete floors and ceilings separating each level and partition walls made of tile block. The primary façade abuts the public sidewalk along the south side of Lockwood while the rear, which is more elaborately detailed with a central entry recessed between two wings, has more of a residential appearance with a large lawn. A winding sidewalk leads from this entrance to Rock Hill Road. The land slopes uphill toward the back of the property and a sidewalk leads from the rear entry to a series of concrete steps that crest the hilltop to a small concrete patio, all part of the original design. Commercial properties line Lockwood to the east, but single family residences are found to the west along Lockwood as well as to the north and south along Rock Hill Road. This large apartment building has had few alterations with the exception of new multipaned windows which are in keeping with the original windows and with its Tudor Revival styling, so that substantial integrity to reflect its historic appearance is retained.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

The red brick, three-story apartment building has a parapeted flat roof with gabled sections to highlight each end and the central entry. On the roof level, there is a hipped roof, elevator penthouse as well as other small projections, including a chimney and both a hipped and shed roofed dormer on the sides of the gables visible from the façade, enhancing the slightly asymmetrical design of the façade. Bay windows with half timbered stucco highlight each elevation, extending from the second floor up to the roofline. Half timbered stucco is also used on the third floor walls on the rear walls of each side wing, where the roofline is side gabled. The bays beneath gabled roof sections project slightly to distinguish them from the main walls and corners on the sides and rear elevations have brick quoining. Limestone details include the parapet cap stones and a stringcourse above the third floor windows on the façade and rear elevation, as well as along the parapeted gables at each end of the façade and at the front of the side elevations. Both the front and rear entry as well as the garage door also utilize limestone details: a quoined round arch on the façade, quoining on the west elevation basement level garage door (which is at grade), and the basket handle arched lintel (with its heraldic shield and ribbon) and quoins surrounding the rear entry and half sidelights. A soldier course above bullnose brick surrounds the building, separating the raised basement from the upper levels, serving as a raised watertable.

The façade is divided into twenty bays of windows on each floor, with two bays on each end under a parapeted gabled roof that has a tall, narrow round arched attic vent with a limestone sill and lintel. In general the windows are evenly distributed, but the sixth bay from the east has paired sashed windows, while all other windows are single sashed windows. All windows have been replaced with multipaned, doublehung sashed windows. The middle three window bays are clustered together, as part of the half timbered stucco bay that extends from the second floor up to the gabled roof highlighted by bargeboards. Below this bay is a large, Tudor arched limestone entry with a 4-light, wood transom above the paired 8 light, wooden doors. The fifth bay from the west end has a small wooden entry door with a square light divided into 4 panes above a tall recessed panel that provides access to a staircase, which is evident in the landing level positioning of that bay's windows. The tall, single light, basement windows are positioned irregularly on this elevation.

The elevation along Rock Hill Road (the west elevation) is set back slightly from the public sidewalk, which angles from the intersection, with a small green space between the sidewalk and building. The west elevation also has gables at each end with a side gabled roof between. The gable at the north end is parapeted, with another slender round arched vent in the gable end. Below this gable there is a hipped, standing seam copper roofed, two level bay window with stucco half timbered walls on the second and third floor that is supported by flat modillions directly above the first floor window. The triple window units in this half timbered bay as well as on the first floor below consist of a sashed window flanked by two narrower sashed windows. Below are two more tall narrow openings, one a basement window and the other a louvered vent. The middle section, below the side gable, is divided into three bays of windows on each level (although the middle basement opening is a vent). The north bay has a single, doublehung sashed window on

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Description (continued)

each level as does the first floor middle window. The upper two floors of the middle bay have paired French doors with small iron balconies. The south bay's windows in the middle section are triple window units like those at the north end of this elevation. The rear gabled roof section on the west elevation has a half timbered stucco gable end with bargeboards that is repeated in the smaller gable of the half timbered stucco two story bay window that is off-centered in this section. This rear gabled section projects slightly, delineated by brick quoining at both corners. The bay window has triple window units, as does the first floor window directly below the modillions supporting the bay. To the north in this bay window are smaller doublehung sashed windows on each level. Below the three levels of windows in this section is the hipped, standing seam, copper roof supported by braces above the limestone quoins on the garage door opening in the basement level. The garage door itself is a replacement steel overhead door.

On the rear, the side gabled wings on either end are treated the same, with exposed rafters on the roof overhang, copper gutters and downspouts with collector boxes, and half timbered stucco walls on the third floor. The fenestration pattern is aligned on all levels with a single doublehung sashed window in each of the four window bays. The only variation is due to the slope of the land which reveals the basement windows (small awning windows) in the west wing but not in the east wing. Toward the interior of the central courtyard, the gabled end section of each of these wings is also treated the same, projecting slightly from the main wall, with brick quoining on both corners, that extend to the roofline, wrapping the corners (even though the third floor walls and gable end are half timbered stucco). These gable end bays have three bays of single, doublehung sashed windows on each of the three floor levels. The east wing is slightly deeper than the west wing which is evident in the two bays of windows north of the gabled bay (one paired, and the other single doublehung sashed windows), while the west wing only has one bay of single doublehung sashed windows.

The recessed south wall of the rear elevation has a flat parapeted roof highlighted by the limestone parapet cap and stringcourse, as does the small section of the interior side of the east wing north of the gabled bay. Centered in the south wall is another gabled, half timbered, stucco bay with two large doublehung sashed windows on each level that extends above the first floor entry. This entry has paired, leaded glass French doors with half height, leaded glass sidelights, all of which are surrounded by limestone quoining. The baskethandle arch above the doors has a heraldic shield and ribbon motif relief design and there are two steps spanning this area that connect to the sidewalk out to the patio. To either side of the gabled bay are three bays of windows on each of the three levels, the middle of which is paired windows while the outer two bays are single window units.

The land rises sharply along the east side, where the building nearly abuts the property line, with trees and grass next to the adjacent parking lot (which is not part of this property), and that is why the basement windows are not visible on this elevation. The east elevation is divided also by the gabled roof sections spanned by the flat parapet, but in this case, the front gable is not at the corner and there is a small side gabled section with a hipped dormer (with paired sashed windows) in front of the front parapeted gable. The rear gabled section has a roof overhang with bargeboards, but it is not half timbered stucco in the gable end, but brick. At both ends of this section there is brick quoining, although there is no wall projection separating this section from the central section of this elevation. This gabled section has triple windows on the second and third floor, but an off centered, doublehung sashed window on the first floor.

The central, flat roofed section is divided into three bays of doublehung sashed windows, but there is another secondary entry door with six lights above the two horizontal recessed panels in the wood door. For this reason, the first floor window in the northern bay is out of alignment with the upper levels. Next to this flat roofed section is a massive, end wall brick chimney that extends well above the roofline. To the north of this projecting chimney is the parapeted gabled roof section that has two bays of windows, the south set being wider, but both being doublehung sashed windows, except the first floor window is also offset. In front of this gabled section, under the hipped dormer, the second and third floors have triple window units while the first floor has two separate doublehung sashed windows.

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Description (continued)

INTERIOR FEATURES

The interior has a hallway corridor centered between the apartments that is transected by the front entry foyer and lobby with the rear entry. The front entry foyer is at grade, with a series of steps that extend its width up to another pair of French doors, with leaded glass. The foyer has stucco half timbered walls above a patterned brick wainscoting. The doorway is a Tudor arch opening on the interior as well. The ceiling is wood planks and beams. Wood details are dark stained wood. The handles of the doors are twisted wrought iron. The floors and stairs are covered with carpet, but the marble baseboard still is visible. The landing at the base of the stairs is flanked by radiators in metal enclosures with mail box panels above. The lobby has the same dark stained wood trim used throughout the building. It has a wood paneled wainscoting below the walls which are scored to look like limestone blocks. There is a painted cove molding. The baseboards are three member baseboards. The floors are carpeted. There are two steps to either side of the lobby at the entry to the halls. The halls have the same baseboards and carpeted floors as well as mitered backband trim. The doors to the apartment units have a large recessed panel with a lighter wood finish and most apartments have stained wood louvered "screen doors". The hall walls are simple plaster walls, punctuated by the apartment doors and the small wood trimmed access doors that originally served as a pass-through for deliveries to the kitchens of each unit. The stairwells are steel, usually with terrazzo treads and wooden railings, but steel newel posts, balusters, and risers. The northwest corner stairs is an open stairway while others are enclosed stairways. There is an elevator near the east end where the hall turns into the east wing.

Apartment units retain their original room configuration, varying widely between units, but all have small kitchens (that have been remodeled), and decorative tile wainscoting and flooring in the bathrooms. The units have the same dark stained, back band mitered trim, single panel wood doors, and three member baseboards. Some units have arched openings in hall doorways and others have French doors between the dining and living room. Some units originally had Murphy beds, with the doors and trim matching the rest of the trim in the unit, but the bed mechanisms have been removed and the spaces are now used as additional closets. The floors are now carpeted and window air conditioners have been installed in each unit although they retain the radiator heat. In several apartments there is more than a single entry door. In some units, a few original light fixtures are still intact.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

This large apartment building has had few alterations, with the exception of the replacement of the original multipaned windows with new multipaned, insulated glass windows, but these are in keeping with the Tudor Revival style of the building. The only other exterior changes have been the replacement of the garage door, which accesses the basement level parking area, and the replacement of what was probably a slate roof with asphalt shingles. On the interior, carpeting now covers the floors in most areas and all of the kitchens have replacement cabinets and Murphy bed mechanisms have been removed, but otherwise the foyer, lobby, hallways, and individual apartment units retain a high degree of historic integrity, with few modifications. The building is in surprisingly good condition considering nearly eighty years of use, with the most serious problems being the outmoded mechanical systems which are not energy efficient. Otherwise the most serious threat to the building is its economic viability, which has led to the current historic rehabilitation project which will be converting the building into a senior citizens independent living complex, which will require only minimal alterations to the historic layout and character defining features.

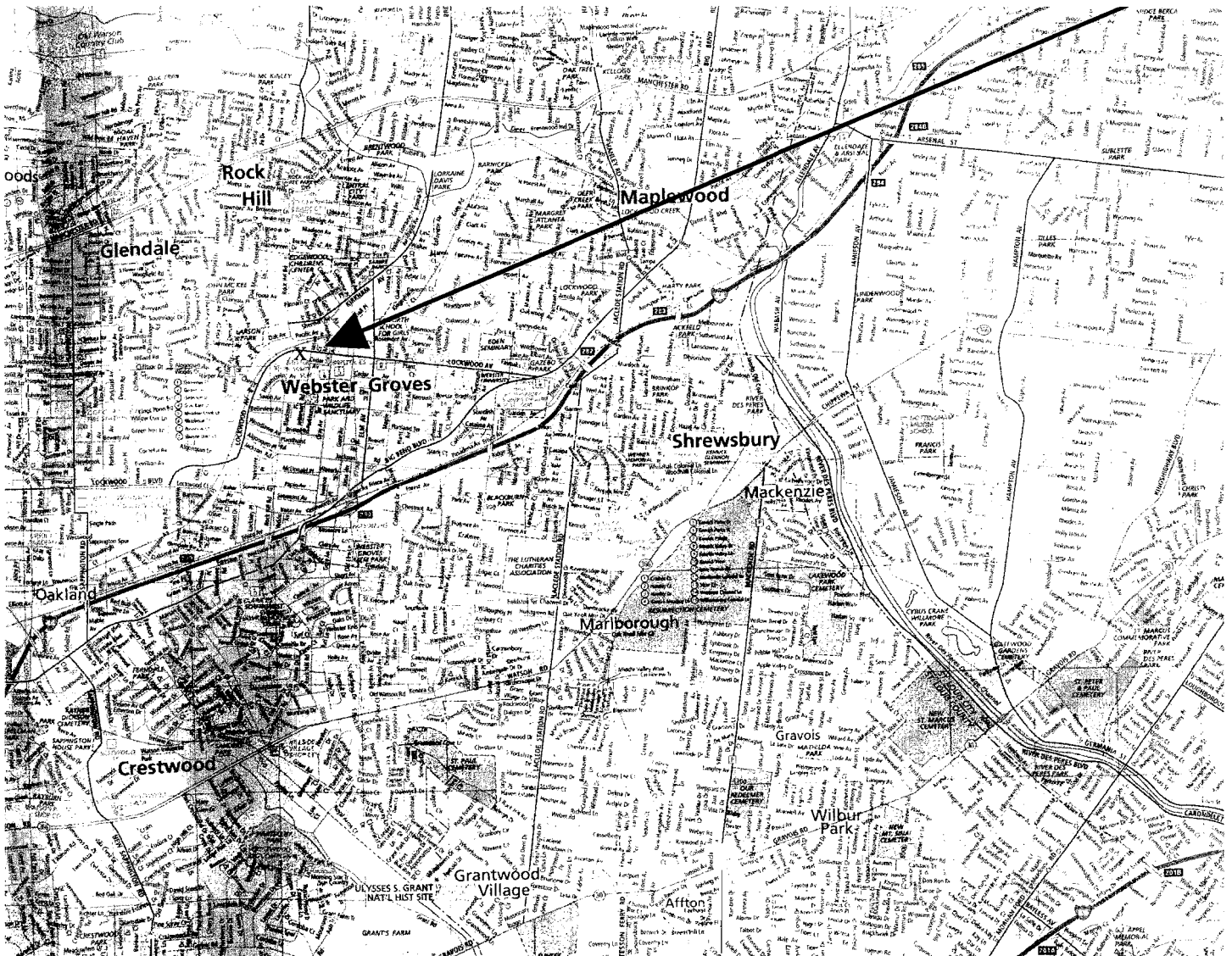
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Section number 7 Page 4 Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Map of St. Louis County, MO

Locating Property



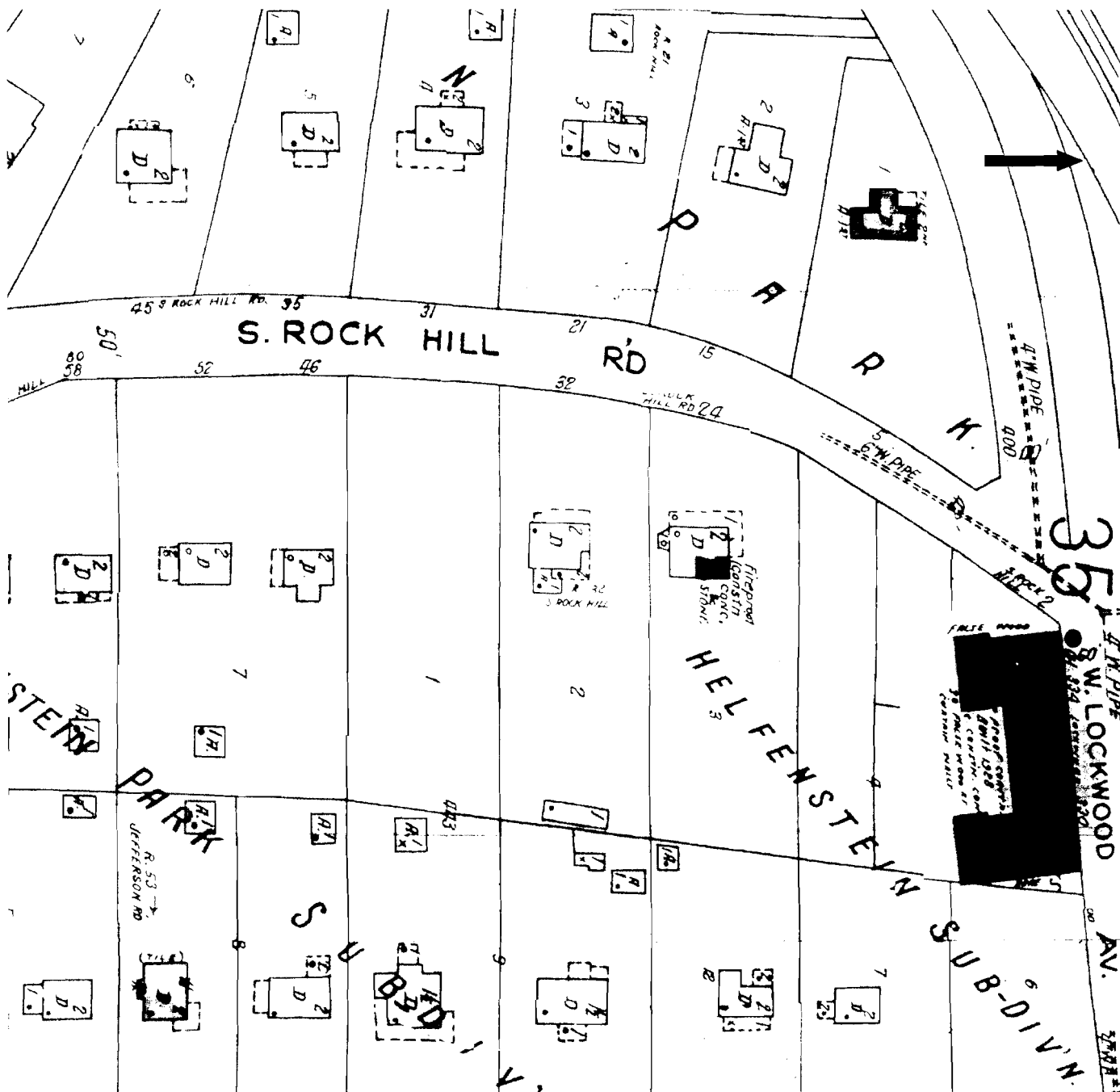
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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Site Plan of Property



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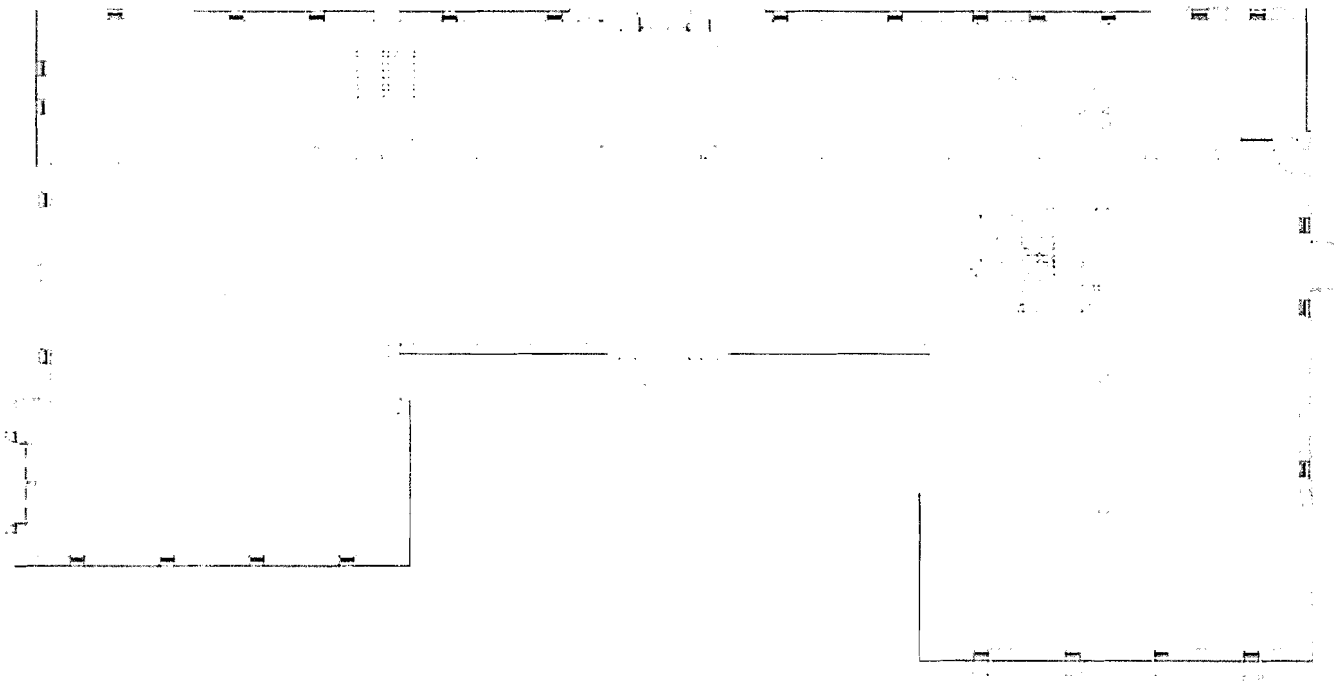
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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Courtesy of Saint Louis Design Alliance

Basement Floor Plan



LOWER LEVEL PLAN

0 10 25



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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Courtesy of Saint Louis Design Alliance

First Story Floor Plan



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

0 10' 25'



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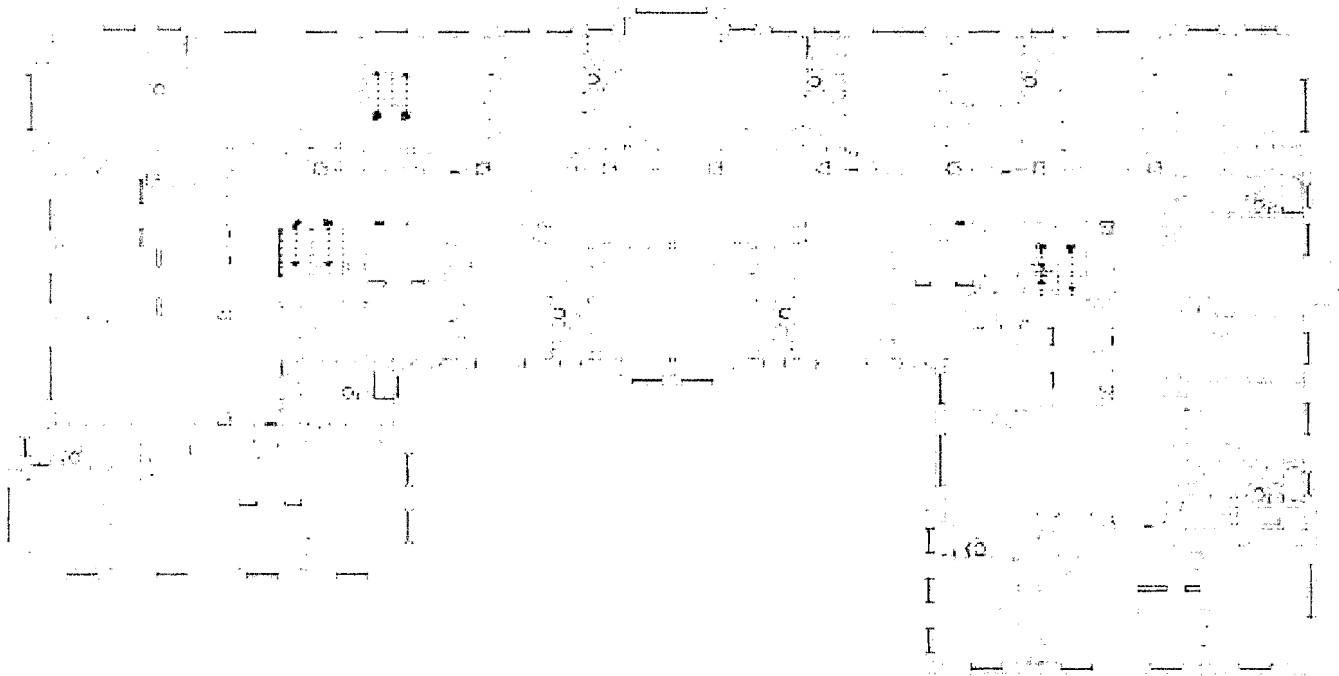
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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Courtesy of Saint Louis Design Alliance

Second Story Floor Plan



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

0 10' 25'



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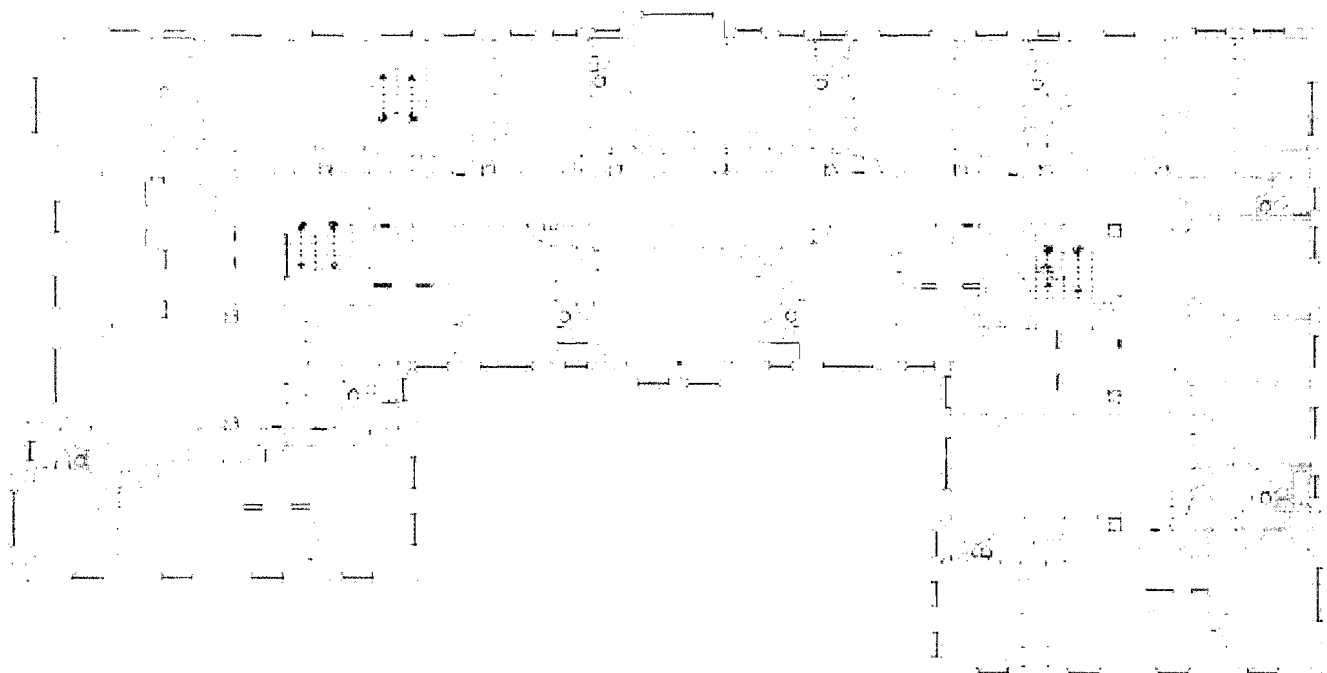
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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Courtesy of Saint Louis Design Alliance

Third Story Floor Plan



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



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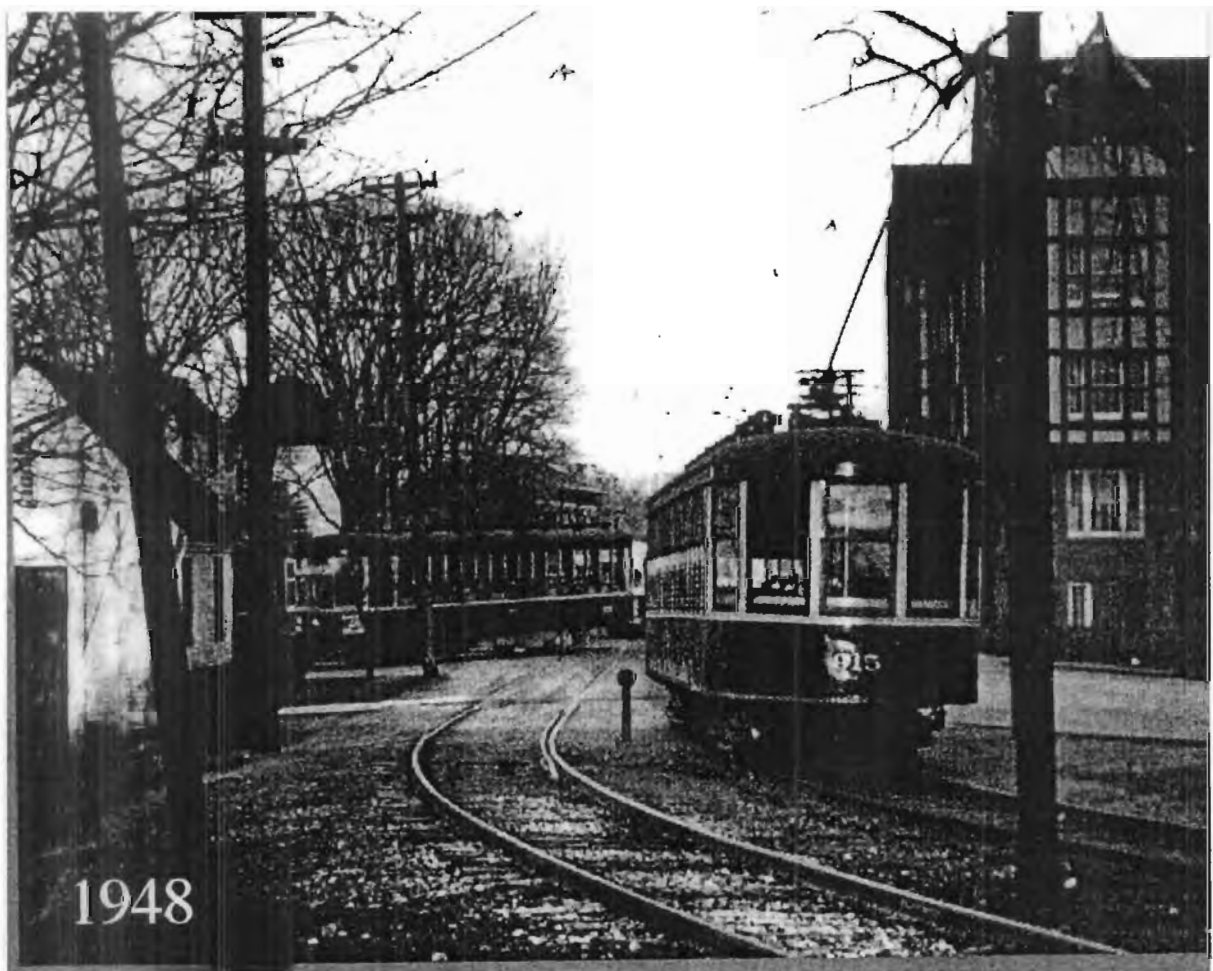
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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Photo found in Building

Historic Photo of Rockwood Courts Apartments
and the Streetcar



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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

SUMMARY

The Rockwood Court Apartments, located at 330 West Lockwood Avenue in Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, Missouri, was built in 1928 by the Widmer Engineering Company for Lavmer Realty and is locally significant under Criteria C: Architecture, as one of the best examples of the Tudor Revival style in Webster Groves. It is also locally significant under Criterion C: Community Planning and Development for its role in the development of Webster Groves, especially the local struggle to determine whether or not to allow multi-family dwellings in this bedroom community, which had previously only allowed single family housing. The proposals for Rockwood Court would result in considerable local controversy and ultimately require the modification of local land use regulations that were carefully constructed to ensure that the community would not be overrun with apartments because of the precedent set by Rockwood Court Apartments. Its position along the streetcar line, at the end of the commercial district on Lockwood, allowed it to serve as a buffer to surrounding residential areas of single family residences, making it more palatable to local citizens, who to this day otherwise continue to oppose modifications to the zoning regulations that would allow for multi-family construction. Although it continues in use as residential housing even today, the period of significance extends from its construction in 1928 through 1928. This period of significance reflects the time span of the intense political battle over amending the city's zoning ordinance, in the face of a housing shortage, which culminated in the construction of the Rockwood Court Apartments.

HISTORY OF WEBSTER GROVES

Webster Groves, Missouri, a suburb located just southwest of the city of Saint Louis, started in the 1850s as a commuter village for businessmen and their families who wanted to escape the crowds, pollution, and disease in Saint Louis.¹ The area that eventually became known as Webster Groves was originally known as Dry Ridge by the Osage, Dakota, and Missouri Indian tribes who first inhabited the region.² The first land grant to a European settler occurred in 1802 when George Sarpy and Charles Gratiot (Sarpy's uncle) received a land grant for 7,000 arpens (approximately 6,002 acres) from the Spanish crown.³ Other business and civic leaders from Saint Louis also owned land in the area, including Thomas H. Benton, Pelagie Labadie, Pierre Chouteau, Junior, and James and John Marshall.⁴ Dry Ridge remained sparsely populated for most of the nineteenth century, but with a slow and consistent increase in population as more people wanted to escape the crowds, pollution, and disease of Saint Louis. Many of the first European settlers in the area were people trying to get away from the city who wanted to move to a rural area and Dry Ridge, with its relatively small population, was an ideal place for somebody looking for a farm.⁵

Dry Ridge failed to grow quickly in part because of confusion over the ownership of the land. After the Louisiana Purchase, the United States established a commission to review and confirm all of the land grants made by the French and Spanish while those two countries controlled the area. The land grant commission required that grants be square, but the grant to Sarpy was L-shaped. Because of the unusual shape of the land grant, Sarpy's land grant was not confirmed in 1816 when Congress finished approving most of the grants; rather the grant was not approved until 1842, further delaying the settlement of Dry Ridge because of the confusion over the ownership status of the land.⁶

The settlement of Dry Ridge began to increase in 1849 when a cholera epidemic swept through Saint Louis, encouraging many people to move to commuter suburbs in an attempt to escape the disease. As the population of the unincorporated area increased, the Webster College for Boys, named for Senator Daniel Webster (also the future inspiration for the community's name), opened on November 11, 1852.⁷ Unfortunately for the growth of the school, and for the community that was forming around it, tragedy struck the campus just three years later. On the inaugural train run across the new bridge at the Gasconade River, on the way from Saint Louis to Jefferson City, the bridge collapsed, killing a number of local dignitaries, including Reverend Artemus Bullard, the founder and president of the Webster College for Boys.⁸

Despite the disaster, the school was able to survive, and the rest of the community continued to slowly grow, including the establishment of a railroad station and a post office. The next year, in 1853, the Pacific Railroad began commuter service to the Webster station.⁹ Once the train started running through town, the people of Webster, as the area was being called, set up a post office in the general store of August Moody (one of only two known pre-Civil War businesses in Webster) and discovered there was already a Missouri town named Webster. In response, the people decided on the name Webster Groves in honor of the college and the abundant number of trees in the community.¹⁰

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Even so, Webster Groves continued a very slow growth pattern, although the cholera epidemic in 1849 did cause a slight spike in population (On June 17, 1849 alone sixty-five one-quarter to one-half acre lots were sold for one-quarter down with the balance to be paid over three years at six percent interest).¹¹ Even after the Civil War, Webster Groves remained a small commuter village. Webster Groves faced a further impediment to growth starting in 1870. Sarpy's granddaughter, Jane Morrison, contested the sale of the original Spanish land grant. Her action to quiet the title caused most of the land to be tied up in court throughout the 1870s and it was not until the end of the decade that the case was finally settled.¹² The settlement of this case finally set the stage for Webster Groves' future growth. The area had grown enough to have a number of local businesses; there were numerous commuter trains running to Saint Louis; the area was open and tree-lined; and title to the land was finally settled. In addition to the decline in land values caused by Morrison's lawsuit, the Missouri Pacific Railroad decided there was more profit in only running freight trains through Webster.¹³ Throughout the 1870s, the railroad would randomly change its schedules and at times only stop in Kirkwood (a few miles further west), often forcing Webster Groves residents to rent a horse or be otherwise inconvenienced. By the start of the 1880s, the Missouri Pacific believed there were enough people to make passenger service profitable, and again began running regular commuter trains. Once the land cases were settled and the railroad service was consistent, Webster Groves was poised for a population boom that would start in earnest with the twentieth century.¹⁴

Webster Groves continued to remain a small unincorporated commuter community throughout the Civil War and into the 1890s. Then on April 2, 1896, Webster Groves officially became a city of the fourth class and the leaders of the community used their new powers as a local government to pass laws that would contribute to the image of Webster Groves they were trying to establish: a clean, quite, orderly, suburban community with easy access to nearby Saint Louis.¹⁵ The new city used its governmental powers to outlaw saloons in the city, and on November 3, 1896, the last saloon in Webster was closed. The city government also printed a brochure to advertise housing in Webster Groves and among other benefits of living in Webster Groves the community focused on the fact that it was a healthy and wealthy suburb that even had macadamized roads connecting to Forest Park and other area attractions: Sulphur Springs, Brown's orchid house, and Sunset Hills.¹⁶ In addition, there were as many as thirty-two commuter trains running between Webster Groves and Saint Louis everyday.¹⁷

Webster Groves was able to use the benefits of being a local government to help the community grow more quickly. The city now had the power to build more roads and other amenities. During the 1890s Webster Groves received an additional impetus to help increase the population. Even before the government was formed, the Manchester Avenue streetcar line extended to Webster Groves, making it even easier for people to commute into the city for work. At the start of the twentieth century, Webster Groves built a water system, not only to try and entice more residents to move to the area, but also in response to a drought in 1901 that left some of the local cisterns empty.¹⁸ The new water system eliminated the need for the cisterns and insured the people of Webster Groves a consistent source of clean water. The city also established its own police force and during a small pox epidemic in 1902 in Saint Louis, the city held a vaccination drive that saw the entire town vaccinated against the disease and in 1903 the Saint Louis County Gas Company was granted the right to operate in the city, including the right to erect street lights in public areas.¹⁹

The city had used these powers to improve its public works and, combined with the advertising efforts of the city, it encouraged a tremendous increase in population. The 1890 census found that Webster Groves had 1,783 residents. In 1900, just four years after the incorporation of the city, the population had only grown by a little over a hundred people, to 1,895.²⁰ Over the next ten years, as Webster Groves began to take full advantage of its new city government, there was a massive population boom. By the time of the 1910 census, there were 7,080 residents in Webster Groves.²¹

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The growth of Webster Groves into a burgeoning community also helped pave the way for a major local controversy. As the community grew, the available land obviously began to be purchased and fill up with buildings. In order to protect the nature of the community, civic leaders took advantage of a new legal concept and passed land use and zoning laws. These laws not only limited where certain types of businesses could be located, but also established a minimum residential lot size of one acre. Subdivision plans were not approved until the land was leveled and houses had to be built in a way that would preserve as many trees on the lot as possible. Some subdivisions even required plan approval before construction on any of the lots could begin.²²

The zoning ordinances led to one of the most vocal debates in the 1920s in Webster Grove: Should the community allow a real estate developer to construct a large apartment building in Webster Groves? Many people felt an apartment building was needed because there was a housing shortage in Webster Groves, especially for those of more modest means. At the same time, there was concern that apartment dwellers were more likely to be transients who would not be committed to the community and would ultimately lead to a bad element infiltrating the city. This debate was brought to the forefront by Lavmer Realty's proposal to construct the Rockwood Courts Apartments across the street from the train depot at the intersection of Rock Hill Road and Lockwood Avenue.

ROCKWOOD COURT APARTMENTS

As early as the summer of 1926 zoning fights began to occur, centered on an apartment building that was to be constructed at Lockwood and Sylvester, but this proposal died because of a petition drive and the fact that many of the owners in the affected areas were out of town when the zoning law changes were proposed. By the end of that summer, rumors began circulating around Webster Groves that the city council was considering amendments to the zoning ordinances to allow for apartment complexes in residential neighborhoods, and that the promoters of a large apartment complex had already prepared to begin work as soon as the zoning ordinance was changed.²³ By spring of 1927, the proposed changes in the zoning ordinances started a fierce political battle for open seats on the city council. Three residents, Fred Holekamp, William Stoecker and Edward F. Wilson formed the People's Party, running on a platform based on lower water rates, equalized tax assessments, a Webster Groves Public Library, the zoning ordinances (summed up in the phrases "Webster Groves Homes First"). They were identified politically as the "Candidates Who Know Webster", which pointed to them as

"Men who have lived in [the] city long enough to be familiar with our traditions and know the peculiar needs of the people, and Men who are not only able but are willing to take enough time out of their own business affairs and devote it to the public service to insure the proper management of city business, and Men who not only SLEEP in Webster Groves but who actually live here and can be found on the job when they are needed."²⁴

In March, 1928, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* reported on plans the Webster Groves Trust Company was working with the Lavmer Realty Company (owned by Arthur Widmer, architect of the building and president of Widmer Engineering, the construction company that built the Rockwood Court Apartments) had plans to erect an apartment building on Lockwood Avenue.²⁵ The plan originally called for four separate apartment buildings, with 102 suites. By the end of the month, mass meetings were being held in Webster Groves to determine the fate of the apartment complex. The meeting grew so heated that Mrs. M. P. McArdle was charged with disloyalty by Irving Spencer because she was not "100% American" and supporters of McArdle denouncing Spencer for making such baseless charges. Spencer, the campaign manager for Mayor Chipman, had already been accused of starting a whisper campaign that Fred Holekamp, the People Party's candidate for mayor, was pro-German, forcing Holekamp's supporters to point out he was one of the leading managers of the Liberty Bond, Thrift Stamp and Red Cross drives.²⁶

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Scaled back to a single building with thirty-three apartments, the project was finally approved and despite all of the bad blood caused by the zoning changes, the Rockwood Court Apartments began construction on April 8, 1928.²⁷ The first apartment building in Webster Groves had its inspection and open house for leasing on October 11, 1928 and within ten days six of the apartments had already been leased.²⁸ Despite the uproar over the construction of the building, the Rockwood Courts Apartments did not lead to an influx of transients who would destroy the quality of the neighborhood, nor did it inspire the construction of overwhelming numbers of subsequent apartment buildings that would turn the sleepy commuter town where everyone has plenty of personal space into a bustling metropolis with people crowded together like sardines. In 1938, a developer started another apartment building project, and had even taken out the building permits, but public outcry and a temporary injunction against the project led that developer to drop the project rather than go to court.²⁹ Again in 1947, there was another proposal for an apartment complex, this one for an eight family, two and a half story building. The City Planning Commission actually sent a letter to residents and held a public meeting to see if the public would accept the apartments, which were to be built on North Rock Hill Road but was never completed.³⁰ Despite these attempts to build new apartment complexes in Webster Groves, there are still few apartments in Webster Groves, mainly because opposition to many projects prevented construction from ever beginning. The only other apartment building known in Webster Groves is a small (approximately ten units) apartment building located at 341 Pacific, just across the railroad tracks on the other side of the small rise on which the railroad tracks lay, obscuring the view of the building from Lockwood Avenue.³¹ This apartment building appears to have been constructed after World War II.³² Despite the supposed threat posed by the Rockwood Court Apartments, Webster Groves continued to thrive and remains a family-oriented community dominated by single family homes.

In addition to the historical significance of the Rockwood Courts Apartments, the Tudor Revival design is also one of the best examples of that style in Webster Groves, noted especially for its use of false half timber bays, steeply gabled pitched roofs, Tudor arched entry, leaded glass, and timber framing in the foyer. It is also the largest residential example of that style, in part because it is one of the few apartment buildings in Webster Groves. As a concession to the city's concerns, the project was scaled back and the design was modified to position the courtyard in the rear, not along the street façade (a design change requested to discourage transients lingering by the building). Situated prominently at the main commercial thoroughfare in Webster Groves, Lockwood Avenue, where it intersects with another major Saint Louis County artery, Rock Hill Road, it forms the landmark division between commercial and residential areas across from where the streetcar station was located.

ARTHUR J. WIDMER, ARCHITECT

Arthur J. Widmer, the architect of the Rockwood Court Apartments, was a renowned architect who's only known design in Webster Groves is also one of the only apartment buildings in Webster Groves. He received degrees in mechanical and civil engineering from Cornell University and later added an architectural degree to his credentials. Widmer was also a successful inventor who developed new methods for using compressed air to spray building materials into place, was a research and development man who worked on adding machines, coke ovens, coke briquettes, plant, ammonia, and soda ash processors, and developed a new technique to reinforce concrete structures, as well as served as a chief draftsman for the Northern Motor Car Company. Despite the varied fields in which he worked, Widmer was best known for his specialty in industrial engineering, construction and design. In 1910 Widmer designed the Railway Exchange Building, which up to that time was the largest reinforced concrete structure in the world other than the Panama Canal.

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

After time in various positions with other companies, Widmer started his own consulting business in 1914 and started Widmer Engineering in 1917. After a short hiatus from his career for an officer's commission during World War I, Widmer returned to Saint Louis and started the architectural firm of Arthur J. Widmer and Associates, Incorporated. By 1940 Widmer had been connected with the design of over 1,000 structures and oversaw the construction for many of the structures. In 1941, when the United States entered World War II, Widmer was over the age limit established by the war department for active duty but was hired as a civilian architect and engineer for the Army. In that position, Widmer oversaw the design and construction of barracks, theaters, cafeterias, warehouses, magazines, airfields, training buildings, schools, residences, manufacturing plants, bridges, roads, railroads, waterworks, reservoirs, incinerators, sewage treatments facilities, and an 800 bed hospital while directly supervising over 500 men. Widmer also owned over twenty patents for his various inventions. The Rockwood Court Apartments is the only known Widmer design in Webster Groves, Missouri, although his association with Lavmer Realty, which was responsible for several residential subdivisions in Webster Groves, may mean that he designed some single family residents as well.³³

ENDNOTES

¹Carol A. Hemphill. *Webster Groves Centennial: 1896-1996*. Webster, MO: Webster-Kirkwood Times, Inc., 1995, p. 7; Clarissa Start. *Webster Groves*. Webster, MO: City of Webster Groves, 1975, p. 5.

²Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 5; Ann Morris. "The Ridge at Rock Hill Road: Historic Walking Tour." Webster, MO: Webster Groves Historical Society, 2005, p. 1.

³Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 5; Marilynne Bradley. *City of Century Homes*. Webster, MO: self-published, 1995, p. 8.

⁴Bradley, *City of Century Homes*, p. 11; Morris, "Rock Hill Road," p. 1.

⁵Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 14.

⁶Bradley, *City of Century Homes*, p. 11.

⁷Bradley, *City of Century Homes*, pp. 20, 24.

⁸Becky L. Snider. "Old Webster Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form. St. Louis County, February 2004 [NR listed 4 August 2004], p. 17.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰*Webster- Queen of the Suburbs*. Brochure. p. 81.

¹¹Bradley, *City of Century Homes*, p. 24.

¹²Hemphill, *Webster Groves Centennial*, p. 8.

¹³St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. Historical Section. "An Historic Survey of the Gore-Lockwood District in Webster Groves," 1983, revised edition 1984, p. 3.

¹⁴St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, "Historical Survey," p. 3-4.

¹⁵Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 63-64.

¹⁶Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 71.

¹⁷Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 71.

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Rockwood Court Apartments
Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

¹⁸Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 63.

¹⁹Hemphill, *Webster Groves Centennial*, p. 11; Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 107.

²⁰Start, *Webster Groves*, p. 93.

²¹Ibid.

²²Velma Benner. *Webster Groves*. Master's Thesis.

²³Alfred C. Wilson. "Fellow Citizens of Webster Groves," Letter, St. Louis, August 1926, clipping in *Kate Moody Collection* Reel 225, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis.

²⁴"Vote for the People's Party Candidates" [Political Advertisement], *Webster News-Times*, 1 April 1927, p. 4.

²⁵Hugh C. Sexton. "\$900,000 Apartment Planned by Group in Webster Groves," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 4 March 1928, Sec. 5, p. 1.

²⁶"Deplorable Occurrence at Recent Mass Meetings," *Webster News-Times*, 1 April 1927, p. 1.

²⁷A. Morris. "Rockwood Court Apartments," Historic Inventory, Office of Historic Preservation, Jefferson City, Missouri; "First Apartment in Webster Groves," [Photo and caption], *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 21 October 1928; Clipping in *Kate Moody Collection* Reel 4 8288, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis; "\$500,000 Apartment for Webster Groves," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8 April 1928, p. 1B.

²⁸"Webster Groves Trust Co. Managing Rockwood Court," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 21 October 1928, p. 1B.

²⁹"Promoters Drop Westborough Club Apartment Project," 12 October 1938, clipping in *Kate Moody Collection* Reel 1 227, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis.

³⁰"A Problem for Webster," *Webster News-Times*, 30 October 1947, p. 8, clipping in *Kate Moody Collection* Reel 1228, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis.

³¹Maloney, Timothy P., Windshield Survey of Rock Hill Road, 29 July, 2005.

³²"Fire Insurance Map of St. Louis, Missouri," New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1924 corrected to 1951 [Vol. 14].

³³Arthur J. Widmer, St. Louis Architecture Files, St. Louis Public Library, Fine Arts Files, 1 April, 1983; Webster Groves Trust Co., "New Listings," [Advertisement and map], 1921, Clipping from Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Lots Four (4) and Five (5) in Block Three (3) of the Re-Subdivision of Lots 10, 11, 13 to 28 and Part of Lots 9 and 12 of Helfenstein Park, a Subdivision in St. Louis County, Missouri, as per plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 6, Page 16 of the St. Louis County Records excepting therefrom a small triangle in the northwest corner of said Lot 5 described as follows: Beginning at the northwest corner of said Lot 5, thence east along the south line of Lockwood Avenue, 3 feet to a point, thence southwest 5 feet 5 1/4 inches to a point in the east line of Rock Hill Road, 3 feet south of the point of beginning, thence north along said east line, 3 feet to the point of beginning. Also excepting therefrom part of Lot 5 in Block 3 of the Resubdivision of part of Helfenstein Park, a subdivision in St. Louis County, Missouri and being more particularly described as follows, to wit: beginning at the northeast corner of said Lot 5, thence west along the north line of Lot 5 8.00 feet to a point; thence south at right angles to the north line of Lot 5 33.62 feet to a point in the east line of Lot 5; thence north along the east line of Lot 5 34.56 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description.

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Webster Groves, Saint Louis County, MO

Photo Log

Photographer: Sheila Findall

June 2005

Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #1: Exterior, north façade, from intersection with Rock Hill Road, facing southeast

Photo #2: Exterior, main entry, facing south

Photo #3: Exterior, north façade, and north end of east elevation, facing southwest

Photo #4: Exterior, west elevation, facing northeast

Photo #5: Exterior, south elevation, facing northeast

Photo #6: Exterior, south entry, facing north

Photo #7: Interior, foyer, facing southwest

Photo #8: Interior, main entry lobby, facing southwest

Photo #9: Interior, typical apartment living room

Photo #10: Interior, typical hallway

Photo #11: Interior, typical hallway doors

Photo #12: Interior, southwest stairwell, from first floor facing east down hall

90°22'30" 7290000E 2 240 000 FEET (IL WEST) 731 R 6 E 732 20'

