

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received:

date entered:

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

1. Name

historic Seven Gables Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 18-26 North Meramec not for publicationcity, town Clayton vicinity ofstate Missouri code 29 county St. Louis code 189

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Seven Gables Development Companystreet & number 7730 Forsythcity, town Clayton vicinity of state Missouri 63105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis County Recorder of Deedsstreet & number 41 S. Central Avenuecity, town Clayton state Missouri 63105

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes ☒ nodate 1985 federal ☒ state county localdepository for survey records Missouri Department of Natural ResourcesDivision of Parks & Historic PreservationHistoric Preservation Program, P. O. Box 176city, town Jefferson City,state 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

Seven Gables is a three-story stucco and brick Tudor Revival building trimmed in brown. It is located in the heart of the city of Clayton on North Meramec Avenue (18, 20, 22, 24, 26) between Forsyth Boulevard and Maryland Avenue. The building faces west and is bounded by the Graybar Building to the north, an alley to the south and an elevated parking area to the east. The street facade irregularly touches on the public sidewalk set-back line; the building has a frontage of 90 ft., 2 1/2 in., on the east line of Meramec Avenue and a depth of 120 ft. It has a basement, but foundation materials are not visible from the street.

The essentially intact 1926 combination commercial-residential building has had no major additions. Characteristic false half-timbering is carried throughout the building, but it is especially evident on the front elevation. Storefronts occupy the first-floor street facades, and residential uses fill the second and third floors of this facade. Two rectangular wings frame the sides of an oblong courtyard (33 ft. by 55 ft.). Both wings contain apartments.

The street facades have steeply pitched roofs two stories high with varied eave-line heights. Multiple front-facing gables, each with a different half-timbered design -- rectilinear, curved and arched -- decorate the upper stories. Two of the front gables overlap. Lighting the upper floors, three shed dormers visually support three gable dormers. A tall multiple-shaft chimney occupies a prominent front and center location.

Windows in each elevation include a variety of styles. The second and third floors of the building core have several double casement windows. The two-story center gable, which bridges part of the walkway to the courtyard, has a bank of four casements, and a Tudor arch below them frames another group of four casements. These casement windows are divided by leaded mullions. Also visible here and in the two wings are double-hung six-over-one and one-over-one windows with wooden frames. Lintels and sills of many of these windows are composed of header bricks. Two sealed windows at the southwest corner of the building and several sealed windows that are visible in the courtyard still show these header bricks.

Slat balusters give the illusion of a balcony balustrade or railing, wrapping around part of the center of the second floor. These slat balusters also carry across both the street and the courtyard sides of the two-story center gable.

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The three-story front elevation (two stories under the gable) is asymmetrical. At both ends of the front facade are canted piers with cyma recta mouldings at their crowns. There are four entrances. A fifth, at the south end of this facade, has been closed up, leaving the step block and the header bricks as reminders. It was replaced by the two entrances to the north. The doors have large rectangular panes of glass at their centers and are topped by transoms. The transoms above two of the doors and above the large store windows in the front and on the sides hold a delicately etched tattersall-patterned glass. A small entry porch beneath an upper-story room precedes one door (18) and a tiny vestibule is part of a second entrance (18). Awning frames and their mechanisms appear to be original to the building. Random brick quoining dresses the corners of the building.

The passage to the courtyard occurs close to the center of the building at ground level between two storefronts. Original plans indicate wrought iron gates at this point, but there is no indication that these were ever installed. On the north and south sides of the courtyard are rectangular, stucco and brick wings which contain apartments. At the east end of this courtyard is a fenced parking area inaccessible from this property. The roof lines of these wings are lower than the front elevation. Shed dormers on these wings are original, but some of their windows have been replaced. These dormers are broken over the main door by one battlement bay, detailed similarly to battlements on the east side of the main block. Several entry doors off the courtyard and on the south elevation are capped by half-timbered gables. The doors have glazed upper panels and are set between sidelights. Looking west from inside the courtyard a small addition to the northeast corner of the passage is visible. Also in view at this point is the asymmetrical treatment of the wings flanking the walkway on the courtyard side. On the south are a battlement and flat roof and on the north is a two-story sloping roof with two dormers. The battlement, broken in the center by a small gable, continues across the east side of the main block.

The south elevation has twelve bays. Two hipped hoods, supported by brackets, cover three entrances. The north elevation is accessible by a narrow walkway, but the view of it is partially obstructed by the Graybar Building. It had four entrances. Three of these are covered by a hipped hood braced by brackets. One of these doors is sealed. The fourth entrance is also covered by a hipped hood.

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 type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1926 **Builder/Architect** George Weber/Dan H. Mullen, Jr.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Seven Gables is significant in the history of the Clayton community and the state of Missouri in the areas of commerce and commercial architecture. The building, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, is one of a few remaining intact commercial structures reflecting the development of Clayton in the 1920s, and it is a rare example of Tudor Revival architecture used in a commercial building in the state of Missouri.

The Seven Gables Building is located in downtown Clayton, the seat of St. Louis County government. Clayton was "discovered" at the turn of the century. Its proximity to the St. Louis World's Fair helped to make people aware of its fresh country air and its convenient location. After W. L. Hemingway, president of the Mercantile Trust Company, purchased a home there in 1905, other prominent St. Louisans followed. By 1910, land for the first private subdivision, Brentmoor Park, had been acquired. To avoid being swallowed up by neighboring University City, Clayton was incorporated as a city in 1913. When the first census was taken in 1920, 3,000 residents were counted. This population more than doubled in the next five years. The early '20s saw an assessed real estate valuation of \$5,585,000 and a city budget of \$17,000. Although Clayton still had problems, too few garbage wagons and tractors that disturbed residents' sleep, it was rapidly changing and expanding.¹ The Seven Gables Building was part of that development. When it was constructed in 1926, at an approximate cost of \$60,000, it was a remarkably sophisticated structure for its time and place. The building contained 27 apartments, 4 offices and 4 storefronts.² In the '20s efficiency apartment living was a relatively new but fast-growing approach to housing for middle-class Americans.³ An advertisement in the St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat in 1927 offered a "three-room efficiency; Seven Gables Bldg.; \$57.50."⁴ This amount probably included gas and electric service.

At the heart of the city, the Seven Gables is convenient to county government and other businesses. Attorney Edward W. Garnholz had his law offices on the west side of North Meramec and lived in the Seven Gables. Both were a short walk from the courthouse.⁵ Sid Autenrieth, grandson of one of Clayton's first political and civic leaders, George Autenrieth, and a prominent citizen himself, lived there within sight of the business that his family had owned from 1878 to 1924, the Autenrieth Hotel.⁶ Some apartment residents also rented office or shop space on the premises. Dr. Harvey Meador lived in apartment #307 and treated his patients at #22; later, Vera Hicks would cater to well-dressed St. Louis women in her shop, Hicks and Hicks, at #22 while residing at #310.

Dan J. Mullen, the architect's son, recalls a 1926 view from the building: "There were mostly woods to the west, as far as one could see, all the way to Brentwood

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Boulevard."⁸ (Brentwood Boulevard is a major county thoroughfare that passes through part of western Clayton.) An aerial photo of Clayton taken two years later still suggests this wooded vista.⁹ Landmarks of an earlier era and a few contemporary buildings were located nearby. The Autenrieth Hotel was down the block, and Gutman's Department Store and Clayton's first garage and filling station, owned by Arthur Kerth, were across the street.¹⁰

Period revivals such as Tudor were ". . . popular during the first third of the 20th century, especially for residential architecture."¹¹ Sometimes referred to as "Stockbroker Tudor," the style often announced one's financial success. A Field Guide to American Houses carefully records the architectural details found in Tudor houses. The Seven Gables Building incorporates many of these characteristics: decorative half-timbering; tall, narrow windows in multiple groups; steeply pitched roofs; a massive chimney; a front facade dominated by gables, quoining and battlements.¹² A drawing from the Historic American Buildings Survey documents the use of Tudor motifs to lend variety to the facade of a circa 1926 multiple-family dwelling in Kingsport, Tennessee.¹³ This style was an uncommon selection for commercial architecture in Missouri; George McCue's survey, The Building Art in St. Louis: Two Centuries, does not include any commercial Tudor architecture.¹⁴ But it was the intentional choice of the two Clayton real estate developers who built the Seven Gables. Captain Gunther Meier and Norman Comfort, partners in the firm of Hawke and Comfort (later Meier and Comfort, Inc.), were attracted to the architecture of Tudor England. Both had become intrigued by it during military service in Europe. In addition, Comfort admired Hawthorne's novel The House of the Seven Gables.

Their associate, architect Daniel H. Mullen (1888-1954), supported their taste with his Tudor-style design. "The architecture was not accidental," Mr. Mullen's son says. "My father deliberately did it in that style with the seven gables, from their (Meier's and Comfort's) suggestions."¹⁵ Mullen attended St. Louis University but developed his knowledge of architecture and his skills working in the offices of La Beume and Klein and for the firm of Klipstein and Rathmann.¹⁶

After the Seven Gables Building was completed, Meier and Comfort located their real estate and development offices in it, as did "Daniel H. Mullen, architect."¹⁷ The three men continued their association and their interest in Tudor Revival architecture. They were involved in designing and developing a number of fashionable residential areas in St. Louis County which included Tudor style houses. Among these are Exermont, Clermont, Fair Oak Estates, and Picardy Lane in Ladue, and York Village in Brentwood.¹⁸

A 1975 aerial picture of Clayton offers a dramatic contrast to the 1920's photo. Many of the wooded areas have given way to high-rise buildings.¹⁹ Today, the once dominant Seven Gables Building, now dwarfed by its neighbors, still functions in much the same manner as it did 59 years ago. Future plans for the Seven Gables are in the hands of its current owner, Seven Gables Development Co. This company hopes to convert the building into a European-style hostelry.

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NOTES

¹ Dickson Terry, Clayton: A History (St. Louis: Von Hoffmann Press, 1976), pp. 183-84, 189.

² City of Clayton, Building Permit 936, January 16, 1926.

³ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 142-50.

⁴ St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat, "Classified Advertisements," March 8, 1927.

⁵ Clayton Magazine, "Clayton's House of Seven Gables: A Touch of Old World Charm," Winter, 1981.

⁶ St. Louis County Directory, 1949.

⁷ St. Louis County Directories, 1928, 1936.

⁸ Interview with Dan J. Mullen, St. Louis, Mo., February 4, 1985.

⁹ Terry, p. 189.

¹⁰ St. Louis County Directories, 1926, 1928.

¹¹ John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy Schwartz, What Style Is It? (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1983), pp. 84-85.

¹² Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Knopf, 1984), pp. 354-71.

¹³ Carole Rifkind, A Field Guide to American Architecture (New York: New American Library, 1980), pp. 101, 114.

¹⁴ George McCue, The Building Art in St. Louis: Two Centuries (St. Louis: St. Louis Chapter, AIA, 1964).

¹⁵ Clayton Magazine, p. 5.

¹⁶ Interview with Dan J. Mullen.

¹⁷ Meier and Comfort were followed by several management companies. Among them were Judge Realty Company and Solon Gershman, Inc. The combination of commercial-residential use continued.

¹⁸ Interview with Dan J. Mullen; St. Louis County Directory, 1928, p. 126.

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NOTES (continued)

¹⁹ Terry, p. 261.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clayton Magazine, "Clayton's House of Seven Gables: A Touch of Old World Charm,"
Vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter, 1981), p. 5.
Terry, Dickson. Clayton: A History. St. Louis: Von Hoffman Press, 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .25 acre

Quadrangle name "Clayton, Mo. - 111."

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5
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Verbal boundary description and justification The south 90 feet 2 1/2 inches of lots 15, 16 and 17, block 5 of town (now city) of Clayton, fronting 90 feet 2 1/2 inches on the east line of Meramec Street by a depth eastwardly between parallel lines of 120 feet.

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

state Missouri code 19 county St. Louis code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title 1. Barbara Kniestedt

organization St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation

date March 21, 1985

street & number 41 S. Central Avenue

telephone 314/889-3357

city or town Clayton

state Missouri 63105

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

John Karel, Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
title Division of Parks & Historic Preservation

date 5/20/85

For NPS 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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2. James M. Denny
Chief, Survey & Registration
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Phone: 314/751-4096

Date: May 15, 1985

126

REAL ESTATE

PICARDY LANE

YORK VILLAGE

MEIER & COMFORT, Inc.

SEVEN GABLES BLDG.

CLAYTON

WYdown 0958

SUBURBAN AND COUNTRY
PROPERTIES

CLERMONT LANE

FAIR OAKS ESTATES

"THE REASOR WAY"

LET US show you what it means to own
your own home in

SUNSET MANOR

ON DENNY ROAD (KIRKWOOD)

You can begin buying it "The Reasor Way"—
\$10.00 or more monthly.

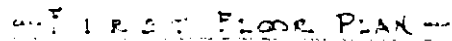
Real Estate
Loans



Insurance
Money

5980 Easton Ave. (Wellston), St. Louis
Cabany 6595

(1928) R. L. POLK & CO.'S



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4283

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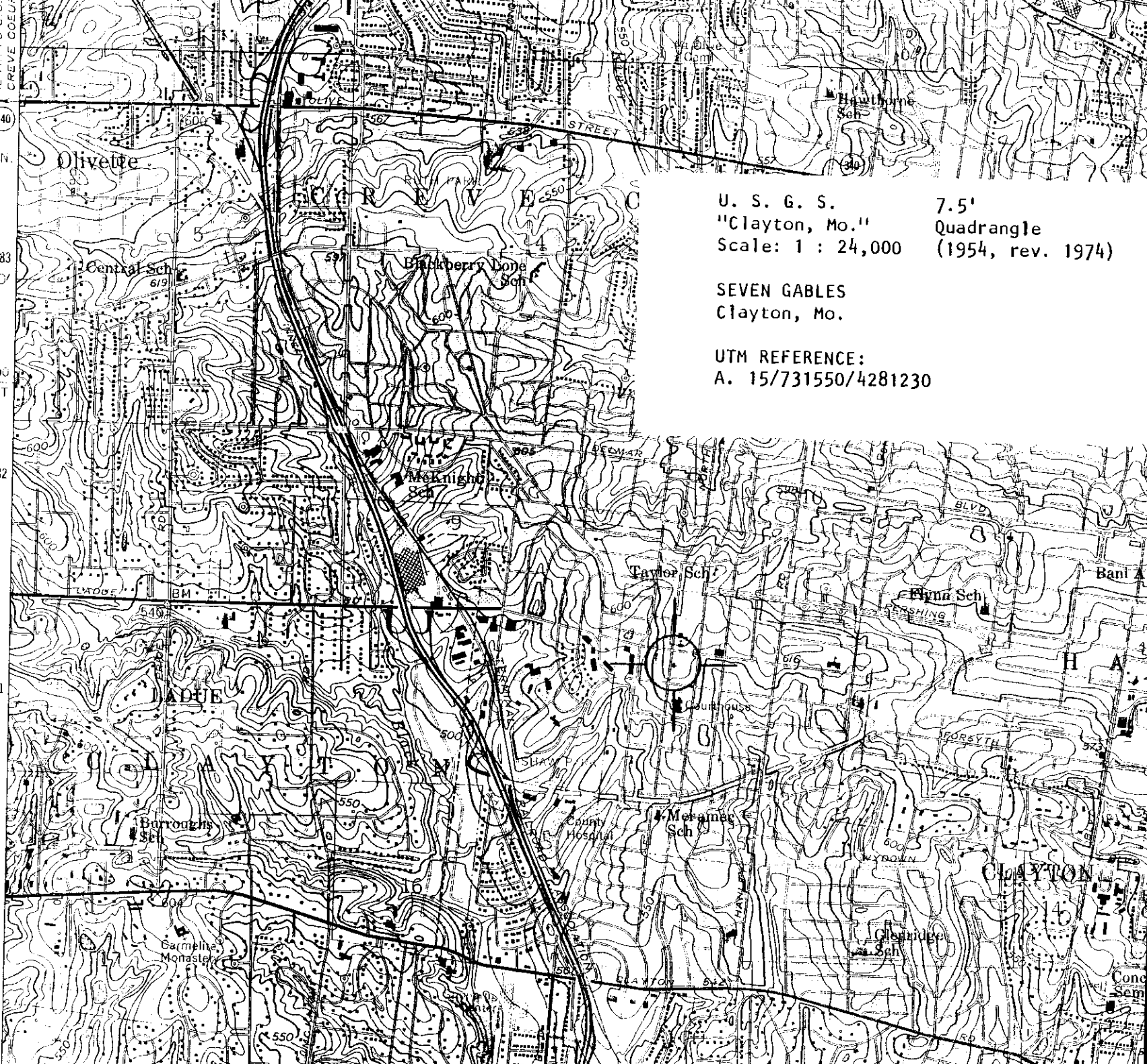
FEET

4282

4281

4280

INTERSTATE 235
1/4



U. S. G. S. 7.5'
"Clayton, Mo." Quadrangle
Scale: 1 : 24,000 (1954, rev. 1974)

SEVEN GABLES
Clayton, Mo.

UTM REFERENCE:
A. 15/731550/4281230

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Seven Gables Building**

City or Vicinity: **Clayton**

County: **St. Louis County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Bill Rachell (unless otherwise stated)**

Date

Photographed: **Jan. 1985**

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

- 1 of 12. Overhead view of main elevation from SW.
- 2 of 12. Main elevation from W. Photo by Esley Hamilton, Feb. 1985.
- 3 of 12. Main elevation from SW. Photo by Esley Hamilton, Feb. 1985.
- 4 of 12. Close-up of SW corner from SW. Photo by Esley Hamilton, Feb. 1985.
- 5 of 12. Close-up of central passage from W; note original sign. Photo by Esley Hamilton, Feb. 1985
- 6 of 12. S or alley elevation from SE. Photo by Gina Hilberry, Jan. 1985.
- 7 of 12. Courtyard from elevated parking structure; looking W. Photo by Gina Hilberry, Jan. 1985.
- 8 of 12. East elevation of passage from SE. Photo by Gina Hilberry, Jan. 1985.
- 9 of 12. Main courtyard door of S wing from NW. Photo by Esley Hamilton, Feb. 1985.
- 10 of 12. Front elevation from W. Reproduction of blueprint (1926).
- 11 of 12. 1928 aerial view of Clayton from SE, showing location and setting of Seven Gables.
Clayton: A History by Dickson Terry, Clayton, Mo.: 1976, p. 189
- 12 of 12. 1975 aerial view of Clayton from W, showing location and changed setting of Seven Gables.
Clayton: A History by Dickson Terry, Clayton, Mo.: 1976, p. 261





NO LEFT
TURN

Chapman

Bernard's







SEVEN
GABLES
APTS.











- FRONT ELEVATION -

Seven Gables

- CLAYTON MO -

HAWKE & COMFORT INC. OWNERS -
DAN H. MULLEN JR. ARCHT.

