

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Albans General Store

other names/site number Head's Store

2. Location

street & number 3516 St. Albans Road [N/A] not for publication

city or town St. Albans [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Franklin code 071 zip code 63073

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

La Verne Brondel
Signature of certifying official/Title La Verne Brondel/Deputy SHPO

2/12/10
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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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****Non-contributing**

2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

GOVERNMENT: post office

DOMESTIC: multiple residence

Current Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

DOMESTIC: multiple residence

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

No style

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof METAL/tin

other WOOD

BRICK

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [x].

See continuation sheet [x]

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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 SignificanceCOMMERCE**Period of Significance**1892-1953**Significant Dates**1892ca. 1930**Significant Person(s)**N/A**Cultural Affiliation**N/A**Architect/Builder**Unknown**Narrative Statement of Significance**

See continuation sheet [x].

9. Major Bibliographic References**Bibliography**

See continuation sheet [x].

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: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property Less than one acre**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	694085	4272305			

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 Debbie Shealsorganization Private Contractor date December, 2002street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203**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 FOP for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Thom Sehnert c/o Smoke House Marketstreet & number 16806 Chesterfield Airport Road telephone 636-532-3314city or town Chesterfield state MO zip code 63005

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St. Albans General Store
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7. Description,

Materials, continued

roof ASPHALT

foundation STONE

Summary: St. Albans General, 3516 St. Albans Road in St. Albans, Missouri, is located about 35 miles west of St. Louis, on the Missouri River, in northeastern Franklin County. It was built in 1892, added to early in the twentieth century, and has seen no changes of note, in form or function, since. It is a two-story frame building with a large one-story ell and an open one-story wrap-around porch. The main block of the building, which resembles a foursquare house, has a steeply-pitched truncated hip roof. The porch and other early additions are all one story tall with shed roofs. The narrow wood weatherboards of the walls and all of the two-over-two windows are all early or original, as are most of the exterior doors. The corner entrance is accented by a cross gable in the porch roof; two doors set into the corner of the building lead to the original entranceway, which is set at a 45 degree angle to the walls. The interior spaces of the building are as intact as the exterior; all door and window trim is in place and in fair to good condition, and most rooms retain their early wood flooring. The front door opens directly into the main store space, which has plaster walls, early or original wall shelves, and a beadboard ceiling. The store occupies a gently sloping lot which has an early twentieth century frame outbuilding near its back edge. Both the store and the outbuilding are counted as contributing buildings; there are no non-contributing resources on the property. The store property today is remarkably intact, and in good condition. The building has served continuously in its original function for over a century, and retains a high level of integrity in all areas of consideration: location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Elaboration: The store sits at the base of a steep hillside, on a roadway which runs alongside the tracks of the Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. The store faces northwest, towards the Missouri River bottoms. When the store was new, the river was much closer; early atlas maps show that it ran just on the other side of the railroad tracks. Today, the riverbank is about three fourths of a mile away, and a small manmade lake has been built in the former riverbed near the store. The store sits in the center of a modern residential development, and most of the land nearby contains large residences which have been built within the last ten to fifteen years. It is one of very few non-residential properties in the area.

The store lot slopes gently up, away from the road and the railroad tracks. It is bounded on three sides by public roads, and there are residential properties near its back edge. The store building is located very close to the north corner of the lot, right next to the road. (See Site Plan.) The southern part of the property contains an open lawn with mature deciduous trees.

A large frame outbuilding sits close to the road, near the southeast (back) corner of the property. It has vertical board walls and a tin roof. The roof is gabled, with a shed addition on the side closest to the store, and another shed addition near the street. (See photos 3 and 8.) Historic

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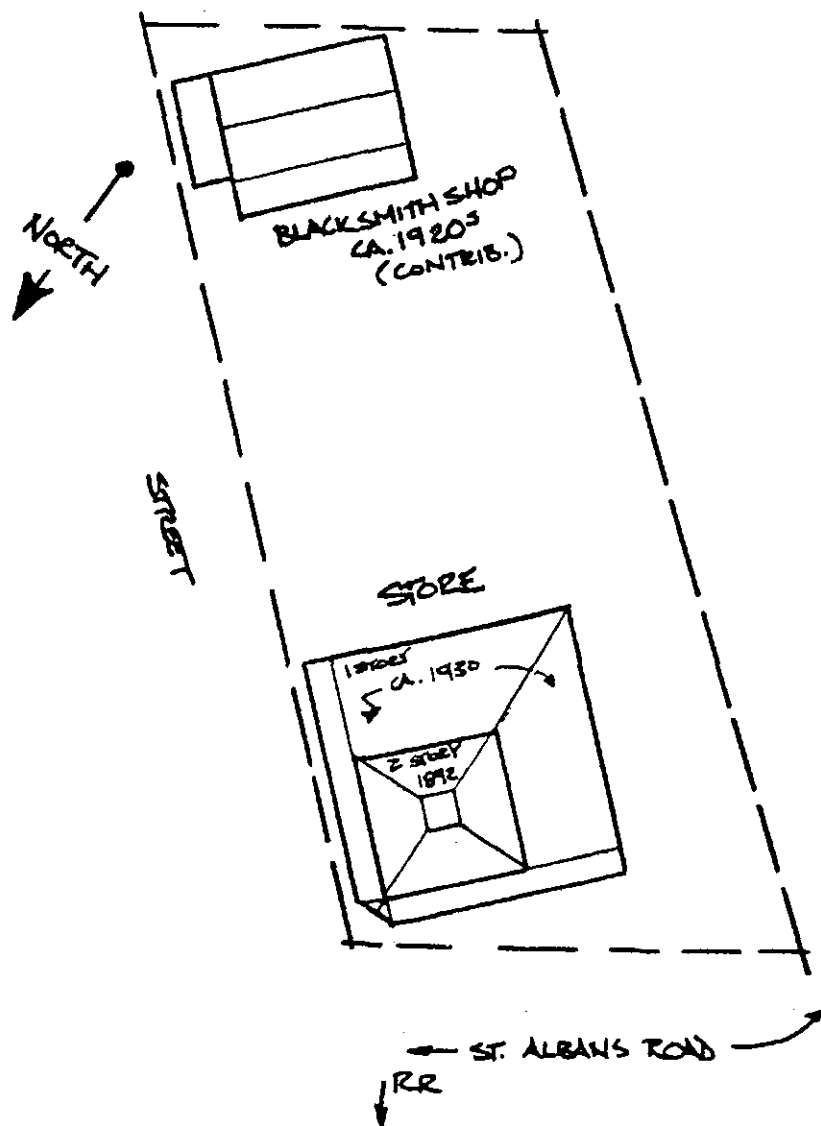
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photos and other sources show that the outbuilding has been in its present form since the 1930s, and that it was in use as a blacksmith shop in the 1920s. It has therefore been assigned a construction date of ca. 1920, and is counted as a contributing building. The only other resource on the property is an early doghouse with wooden siding and a small gable roof. (See photo 3.) That structure has been judged too small to be included in the resource count.

Figure One. Site Plan. Approximate scale 1"=27'. Drawn by Deb Sheals.



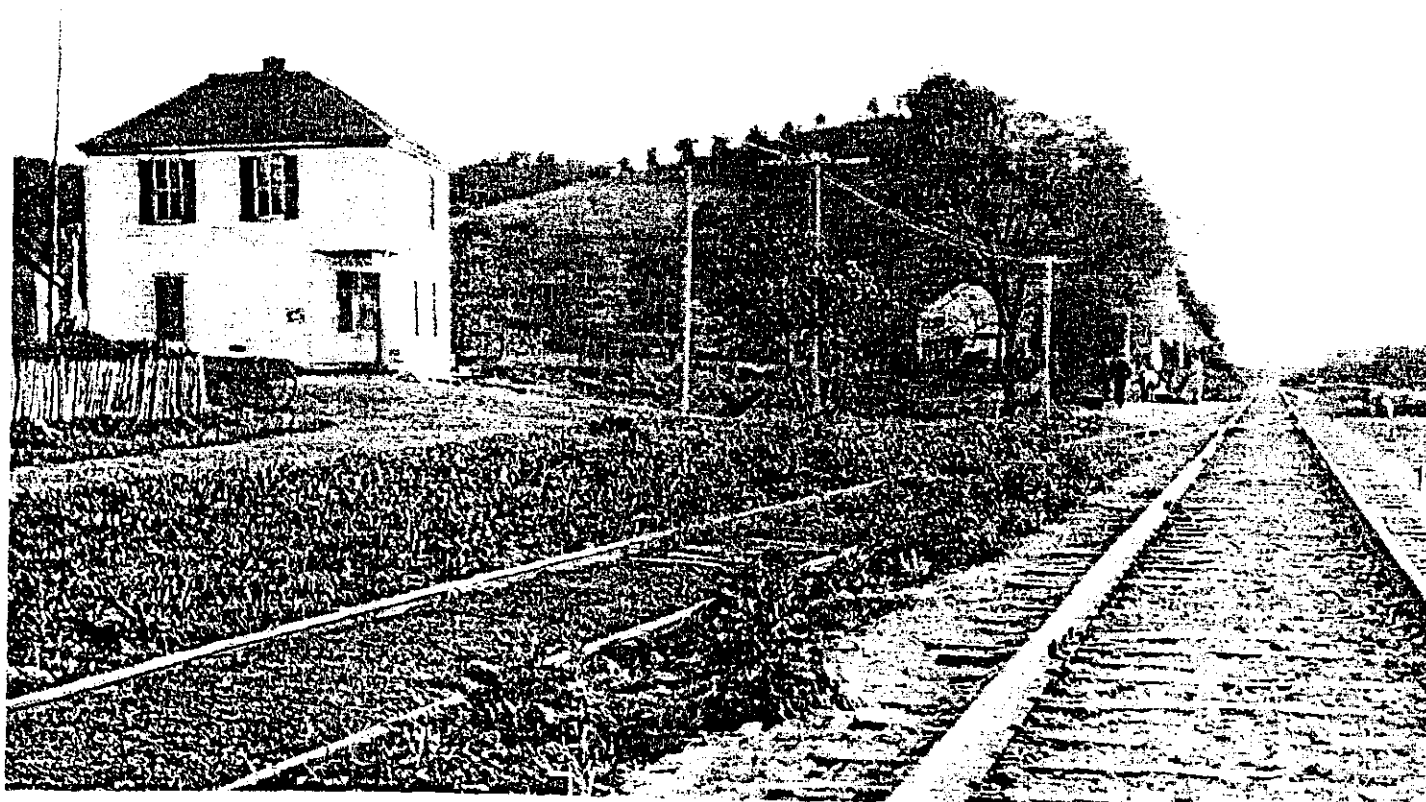
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The store building was built in two stages. The original structure, which was erected in 1892, most closely resembled a porchless foursquare house with a corner entrance when new. (See Figure Two.) Around 1930, a one story addition was made to one side and the back of the building, and a wrap-around frame porch was added to the other two sides.¹ (See Figure Three, ground floor plan.) The porch saw minor modification around 1941, and the rear section was expanded again slightly at some point, creating a small screen porch and storage area on the southwest wall. That small addition, which appears to be well over fifty years old, is the last change of note the building has seen.

Figure Two. Early photo of the store, pre-addition. From Lucie Furstenberg Huger's St. Albans: History and Folklore of a Missouri River Town, (Kirkwood, MO: Fairfield Publishing Company, 2001) p. 81



¹ The addition was definitely in place by the 1930s, and most likely dates to the late teens or early twenties. It was in place when the store was photographed as part of a larger view of St. Albans in the 1930s. That photo can be found on p. 86 of Lucie Furstenberg Huger's St. Albans: History and Folklore of a Missouri River Town, (Kirkwood, MO: Fairfield Publishing Company, 2001.) The property was purchased by John Pfeiffer in 1915, and it has been assumed that Pfeiffer expanded the store to its present size shortly after that.

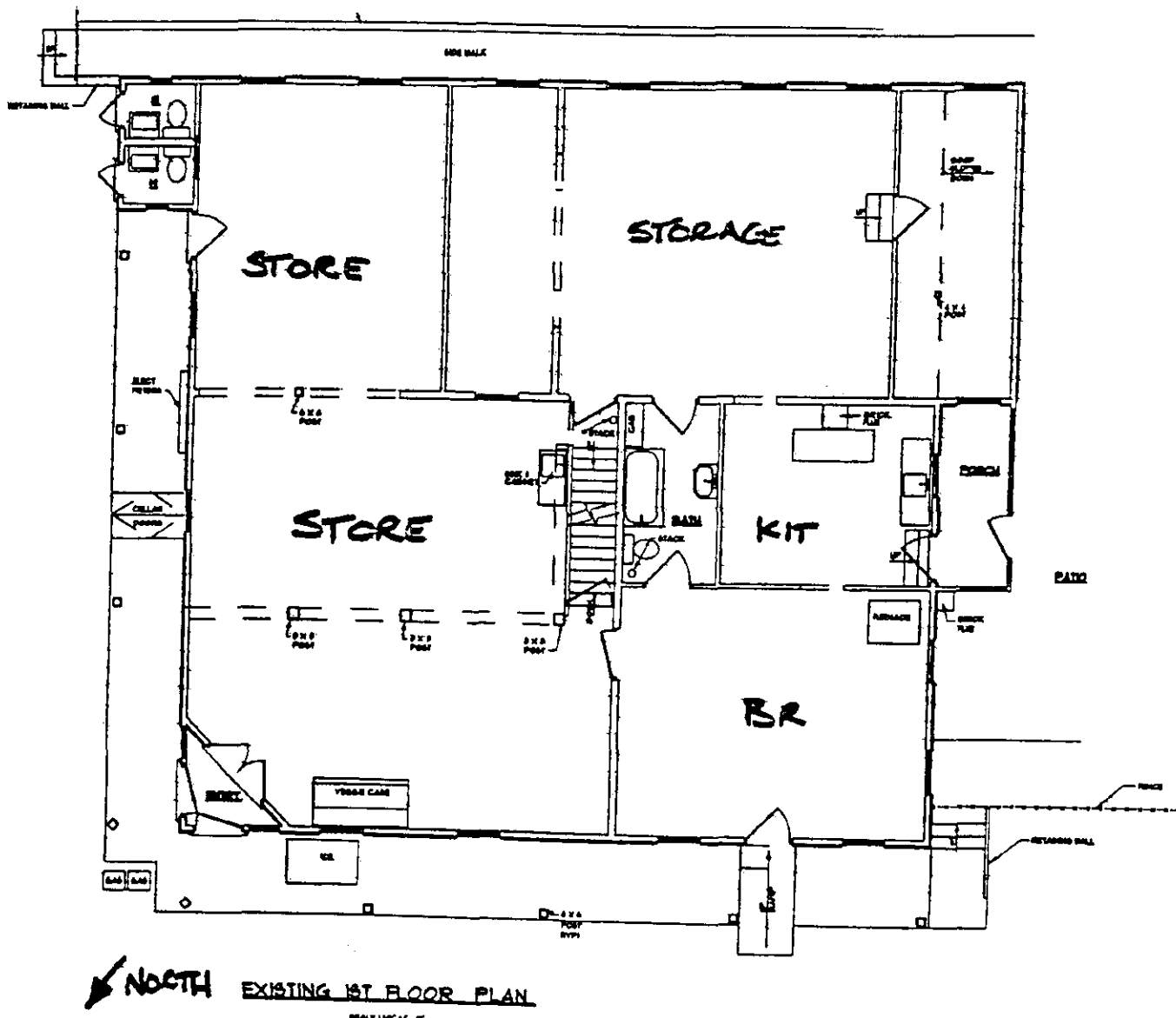
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Figure Three. Ground Floor Plan. Drawn by Lauren Strutman Architects, PC. Chesterfield, MO.
The building measures approximately 52 feet by 52 feet.



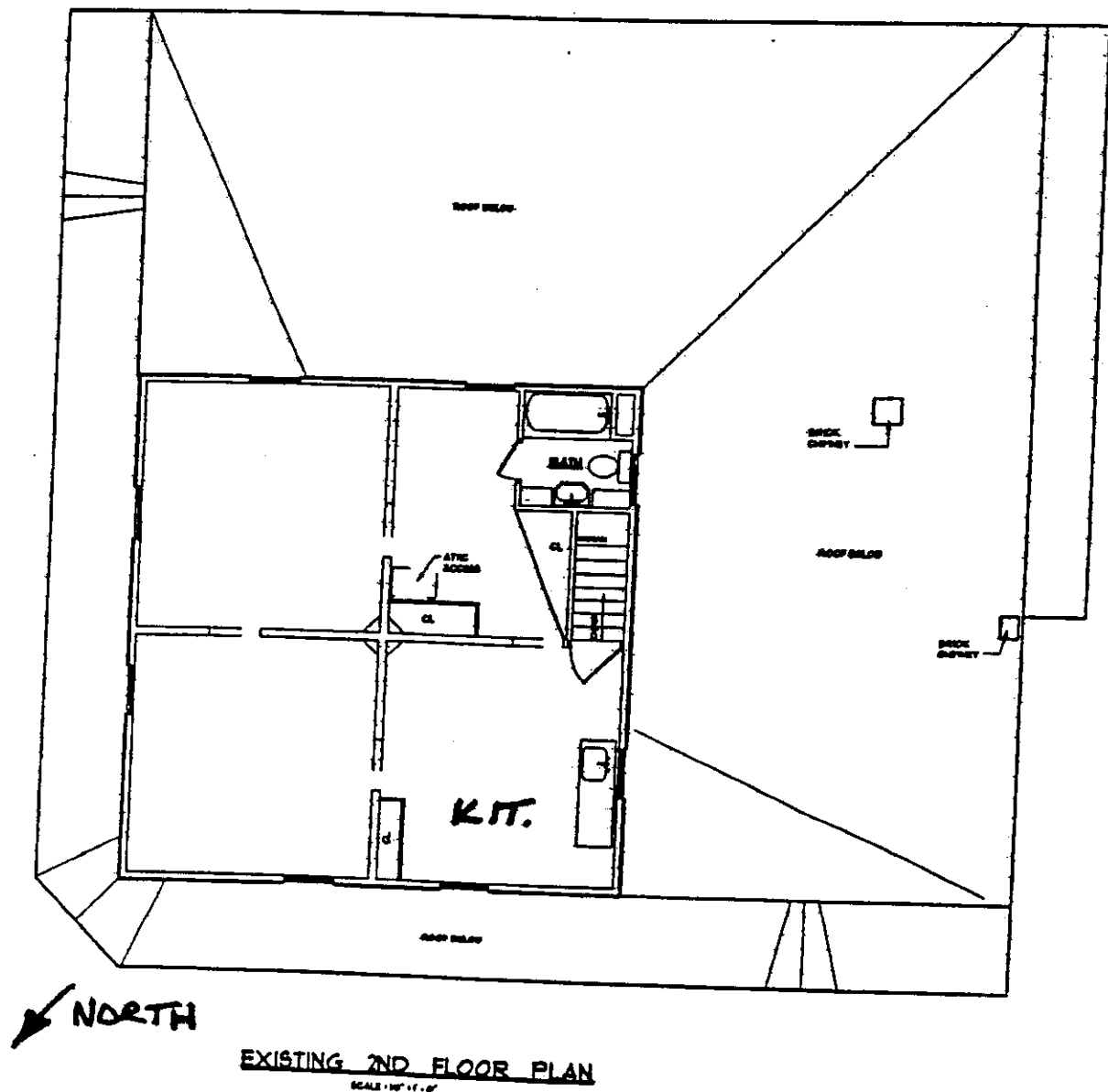
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Figure Four. Second Floor Plan. Drawn by Lauren Strutman Architects, PC. Chesterfield, MO.
The second floor space measures approximately 28 feet by 28 feet.



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All of the exterior walls of the store are sheathed with narrow wooden weatherboards which are early or original, and in good condition. All of the windows have early or original double-hung wood sash, with two-over-two lights. Each wall of the second floor has two evenly spaced windows; the windows on the first floor are more randomly placed. The oldest part of the store has a tall cubic form, and a steeply pitched hipped roof which has a flattened top section. The additions are all one story in height, with wide low-pitched roofs. (See photos 1-7.) A stone cellar is located beneath half of the original building; there is a low crawl space beneath the other sections.

The open wrap-around porch spans both the northeast and northwest elevations. It has a concrete floor, simple square support posts, and exposed rafter ends. A prominent cross gable is set into the porch roof above the corner entrance. That gable end is sheathed with weatherboards and holds an early sign that reads "Head's Store". (The business has been Head's Store since 1941.) There are two smaller cross gables in the porch roof above secondary entrances as well; both of those are near the ends of the porch. There is also a low wooden railing which runs along the porch roof, between the cross gables. Parking areas for the store line both sides of the porch, and a pair of early gas pumps is located right in front of the entranceway. (See photo 9.) The pumps are several decades old.

The entrance to the building is set beneath the Head's Store sign. The original cutaway corner entrance was enclosed to form a small entryway at a very early date, probably when the porch was added. The two exterior doors are wooden, with multiple square lights. They are topped by glass transoms and each has a small wood double hung window next to it. The original entrance doors are within the entryway, one step up from street level. Those tall doors have single recessed panels beneath very tall three-light glass panes. (See photo 11, interior view.)

The entrance leads directly into the main room of the store, which occupies the entire ground floor of the original part of the building, and part of the early addition. (See Figure Three.) A large beam supported by three chamfered wooden posts runs across the center of the room, and the sales counter is located on the wall opposite the entrance. (See photos 10 and 11.) Two walls of the room are lined with early wooden display shelves, and the ceiling is sheathed with early or original painted beadboard. The woodwork around the front doors and the windows is composed of grooved molding with bull's eye plinth blocks.

The back half of the ground floor contains two large rooms, both of which have plaster walls and ornamental pressed metal ceiling panels. The room on the southeast part of the building is open to the main sales floor, and the one to the southwest is reached via a doorway behind the sales counter. The southwest room is currently used for storage; it has in the past been used as a living room for the shop keepers and a public dining room when the business operated as an inn. It has a row of two-over-two windows along its back wall which are surrounded by simple flat wood trim.
(See photo 12.)

The area southwest of the main store space contains a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom. The

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bedroom is at the front; it has a wood floor, and a varnished beadboard ceiling. The bedroom is the only room in the building with trim which is varnished instead of painted. The doors and windows are surrounded by simple wide flat trim, and there are tall baseboards with similar profiles. The door leading to the porch has a large glass pane in its upper half; the other doors in the room are paneled, with no glass. The four-paneled door to the store space, which was an exterior door originally, is taller than the others, and topped with an open transom.

The second floor of the building contains a four-room apartment. (See Figure Four.) It is reached via a steep stairway located in the south corner of the original building. The rooms of the apartment are all roughly the same size, with pine floors, plaster walls and the same type of grooved woodwork found in the store space below. (See photo 14.) One room contains a bathroom and closets, and another houses the kitchen. The other two are open, and all are highly intact.

Overall, the St. Albans General Store is a remarkably intact historic building, in form and function. The building has seen no changes of note since it was expanded in the early part of the twentieth century, and it is used today very much as it was in the 1930s. The store is still in business, and the residential support spaces, though now vacant, are unchanged and in good condition. The store exhibits a notably high level of integrity. △

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Summary: The St. Albans General Store, in St. Albans, Franklin County, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. It is a highly intact rural general store which was built in 1892 and has been in continual operation as a store ever since. The store building was built by a group of St. Albans residents in 1892. The members of that group, which consisted of ten landowners in the area, appear to have developed the property more as a community improvement project than as a business venture. The store company rented the building to various proprietors until 1915, when it was purchased by John Pfeiffer, who ran the store and lived on the property thereafter. Pfeiffer's daughter, Mae Head, bought the property from her father in 1941, and ran the business as Head's Store for the next 61 years; it operates under that name yet today. The store was built at a time when general stores were important elements of rural life; it stands apart in that it has survived well past the period in which such establishments were common. It is also typical of rural general stores in that it housed the community post office for many years during the period of significance. The building was enlarged ca. 1930, and has seen no changes of note, in form or function, since that time. It occupies the same quarter-acre lot that was set up for it in 1892; at the back of the lot is a frame building which was used as a blacksmith shop by then-owner John Pfeiffer in the 1920s. The shop is intact and is counted as a contributing building; there are no non-contributing resources on the property. The period of significance runs from the opening date of 1892, to 1953, the arbitrary fifty year cut-off. The St. Albans General Store is a highly intact and significant example of a rural general store and residence.

Elaboration: The St. Albans General Store is located near the Missouri River in St. Albans, Franklin County, Missouri. St. Albans has enjoyed access to good transportation and communication networks since the first days of settlement, first via the Missouri River, and later through railroad and public roadways. Access to the Missouri River was especially important early in the 1800s, when good overland routes were rare. The river carried early explorers through the area, and later provided transportation to settlers.

The famed expedition of Lewis and Clark made an overnight stop there in May of 1804, camping on an island near the present town site. While there, Meriwether Lewis decided to climb Tavern Rock, a distinctive 300 foot tall cliff nearby which has a large cave in its base. That decision almost changed the course of that pair's famous expedition; Lewis fell off the top of the bluff, but caught himself after 20 feet, reportedly by thrusting his knife into the side of the hill.² William Clark recorded the event in his journal, describing the cliff and cave, and then noting that "Capt. Lewis near falling from the Pinecles of rock 300 feet, he caught at 20 foot."³

Within a few decades of Lewis and Clark's visit, settlers were routinely using the river to gain access to the rich bottomlands and picturesque scenery of the area. Tavern Creek, which flows

² Huger, p. 2.

³ Excerpt from William Clarke's journal, May 23, 1804, quoted in Huger, p. 2.

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into the Missouri River near Tavern Rock, provided a good supply of fresh water, adding to the attraction. The earliest homesteads in northeastern Franklin County were filed in the 1820s, and by the early 1830s, the Tavern Creek area had become a favored destination for German immigrants.⁴ Most of the original members of the St. Albans store company were of German descent.

Even though the majority of those early settlers were German, the actual plat for St. Albans was filed by a Scotsman. The town was laid out in 1837 by Scottish immigrant, Dr. Peter Kinkaid, who was one of the first property owners in the area. Kinkaid's son, John, later helped found the St. Albans General Store.⁵ Kinkaid was no doubt planning to capitalize on the good river landing; the text which accompanied his plat noted that "This place is well known to all Navigators of the Missouri River as a celebrated landing place for steamboats...."⁶ Although Kinkaid's plat included 128 lots, the town never grew very large. A description of St. Albans which was written almost a century later, in 1925, noted that "It has four houses and probably never had more than ten."⁷ In spite of that small size, St. Albans has functioned as a service center for residents of the surrounding countryside throughout its history.

Transportation services for the community were greatly improved in the years following the Civil War, via the introduction of railroad service. The first railroad came through in the 1870s, and St. Albans was for many decades a stop on the Rock Island Line. A schedule for the Rock Island Railroad which was printed in 1910 shows that at that time, one could get from downtown St. Louis to St. Albans in just under an hour and a half.⁸ The railroad became even more important to St. Albans after 1904, when a flood caused the river to shift away from town, eliminating the option for boat travel.

The tiny community also gained the important asset of a local post office in 1889, when Charles Becker became the first postmaster of St. Albans. Charles Becker was the son of Judge Francis Becker, a German immigrant who settled on a land grant farm at the mouth of Tavern Creek in 1840. Francis Becker, who soon became an American citizen and spent many years as a judge, built a large house and barn just east of the current store property in the 1840s. (The barn later became the core of the Old Barn Inn, now operating as the restaurant Malmaison.) Charles Becker, who grew up on that farm, played a prominent role in the founding of the St. Albans General Store.

⁴ Kiel, p. 13, and Huger, p. 5.

⁵ Huger, p. 11.

⁶ Franklin County Plat Book A, p. 24, quoted in Huger, p. 11.

⁷ Herman Gottlieb Kiel, The Centennial Biographical Directory of Franklin County Missouri, (Washington, MO: Missourian Publishing Co., 1986) p. 210.

⁸ Huger, p. 80.

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The St. Albans General Store differed from many such businesses in that it was a group project, apparently initiated as much for its value to the community as for its profit-making potential. The store was built by a group of ten area residents, each of whom paid equal amounts to finance the project. The details of that early agreement have been preserved in the "Day Book of the St. Albans Store Building" which was kept by Charles Becker, the first director and treasurer for the store company.⁹ Becker's book includes the original agreement, accounts of the construction project, and yearly updates through the first years of the twentieth century. The original agreement reads, in part:

At a meeting held by the neighboring residents of St. Albans, Mo on March the 6th 1892 the following members Gustav Hansgen, Charles Hardt, William Stettes Sr., John Kinkaid, William Kochs Jr., F. W. Berthold, Charles Becker, Bernhard Heipertz, Justine Heipertz and Hulda Steins, Mary Becker, Alvina Rosenbaum agreed to organize for the purpose to buy a parcel of land and build a two story frame store house on the same suitable for a general country store....¹⁰

That document also shows that everyone in the group agreed to pay \$60 each to initiate the project, and that they worked out details of the construction project and management for the group. Charles Becker's name came up frequently. He was elected the "first director" (of three), and it was from him that the group purchased land for the new building:

...the site to build on was decided by all ten votes to be on the corner of Chs. Beckers field....There were ten votes in favor to buy one quarter of an acre of land of C. Becker for the sum of \$15....it was agreed by all members that the said directors should buy the material at their earliest convenience and proceed to build and superintend the building in the manner hereinafter specified.¹¹

As indicated by that last statement, the group had apparently even worked out what the new building was to look like. An index for the day book includes a reference to "Plans and Specifications," for the two pages following the initial agreement. Unfortunately, those pages have not survived. A later entry does, however, identify the person responsible for that design. That entry includes an itemized account of work done by a Louis Becker, whose relationship to Francis and Charles Becker is unknown. Louis Becker's list of tasks starts with "For Making Plan", a job

⁹ A photocopy of the book is in the possession of Thom Sehnert, present owner of the property.

¹⁰ Becker, p. 1.

¹¹ Becker, pp. 1-2.

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for which he drew no pay.¹² Louis Becker also worked for almost three months as a carpenter, more than most men involved with the construction project.

The term "store house", which is used frequently in Charles Becker's early records, reflects the multi-functional nature of the new building, which combined ground floor store space with second story living quarters. Such combinations of commercial and residential functions were common at the time, especially in association with smaller businesses. One history of commercial architecture noted that the origin of that use pattern "can be traced back to Roman antiquity, when many urban buildings contained shops at street level and living quarters above. This shop-house combination again became a standard form in European cities during the late Middle Ages."¹³ In the United States, that practice spawned the evolution of the "two-part commercial block" a building form which came to dominate commercial architecture in small to moderate towns and cities.

Unlike two-part commercial blocks, which are most often rectangular buildings with flat roofs and open ground floor storefronts, the new St. Albans Store had a more residential appearance. The hipped roof, cubic form, and double hung windows are all more typical of residential than commercial architecture. The new building did, in fact, look much like an "American Foursquare" house, a house type which became popular a few years later.¹⁴ The large size and distinctive corner entrance, by contrast, imparted a decidedly commercial character. Those features, combined with the building's proximity to the railroad and the public roadway, made it clear to even the casual observer that the new building housed a commercial operation. The additions made in the twentieth century enhanced that commercial ambiance.

Charles Becker's book contains detailed information about the construction project, including related expenses and records of labor expended. The first entry in the "Incidental Expenses" section shows his attention to detail: "1892 March 22, Paid for this book .40".¹⁵ The book also shows that work on the store began right away. The land was surveyed the same day he bought the book, and by April 8, he had taken delivery of lumber and paint from the nearby town of Pacific. Things moved quickly thereafter. The walls were started around May, when August Heipertz was paid for sills, and by July, interior finishes were underway. Payments made in July covered such things as transom hinges, flooring and varnish.

¹² Becker, p. 17.

¹³ Richard Longstreth, The Buildings of Main Street, (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987) p. 24.

¹⁴ Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House, (Cambridge and England: The MIT Press, 1987) pp. 84-87. Gowans notes that the foursquare was extremely popular with mail order house companies from around 1900-1925.

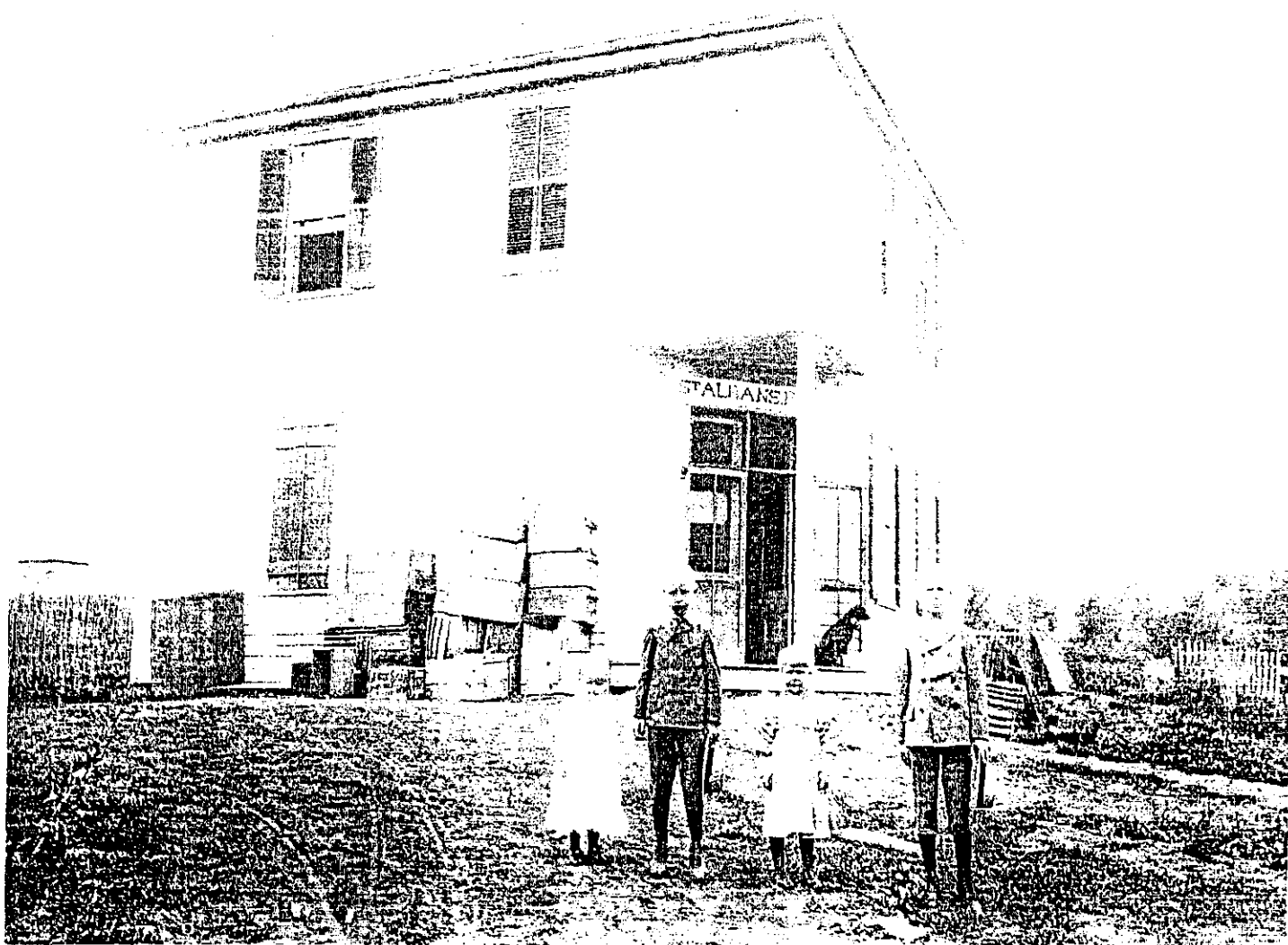
¹⁵ Becker, p. 5.

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Figure Five. An early photo of the store, probably taken before 1907. (The original still hangs in the store.)



The actual construction project appears to have been as much a group effort as was the decision to establish a store. Becker's book includes itemized accounts of payments made to eleven different men who worked on the building. Many of the founding members of the store company also helped construct the building. Becker kept careful records of time worked and expenses incurred by each man, and recorded how much each was paid out of the general account. Charles Becker, Louis Becker, and Bernard Heipertz spent the most time on the project. Charles Becker

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performed a multitude of tasks, ranging from keeping accounts and paying others, to driving his team to Pacific to pick up building supplies. Heipertz worked early in the project to lay the stone cellar, and then spent most of May and June doing carpenter work. As mentioned above, Louis Becker worked mostly as a carpenter.

The list of incidental expenses and the labor records conclude in early August, leading to the conclusion that the store was open for business by the fall of 1892. The founding members apparently had a celebration before that opening; a couple of entries in Becker's book indicate that a good sized party happened in June. A line item on the incidental expenses list shows that the group spent just over \$30 in June on a group of decidedly non construction-related items: beer, lemons, sugar, wine, bread, sausage, mustard, ice, and music. (Compare that amount to \$5 spent for 100 bricks from Pacific just a few days earlier.) Charles Becker's work list shows that he put that gathering to good use, however; his task list that same day shows that he "Collected [sic] at the dance."¹⁶

Figure Six. Charles Becker's "Day Book", p. 5.

11	Black Diamond 235	Expenses 50	2	85
16	28 lumber from Chicago		5	65
18	Beer 13.60 Lemons 4.00 Sugar 1.00 Wine 1.20 Bread 2.00		7	00
	Sausage 1.15 Mustard .25 Ice .50 Music 3.00 Exp. 3.65		3	05
	Lumber from Pacific		15	95
	(See King) 2 box wood screws			20
28	Paid to Carstensen 10 lbs for plaster		5	00
	4.00 to 1 cent 10 lbs for plaster			

¹⁶ Becker, p. 5 and p. 28

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That note probably refers to his job of collecting equal shares from all of the members of the company to cover the cost of erecting the building. The record book shows careful calculations of amounts paid out, as well as lists of who had paid their share of the total expenses, and when. Everyone was assessed an equal amount, and later, when rent was coming in from the business, everyone received equal payments on their investment. The book contains no mention of store stock, only rental agreements, indicating that the person renting the property was responsible for actually running the business.

The first person to rent the store from the company was Bernard Heipertz, who was both a founding member of the company and one of the men who spent the most time constructing the building. His first rent payment was made to the company July 18, 1892. Heipertz apparently resigned as a director when he became the proprietor of the store; the notes from the "2nd Annual meeting of the Store Building at St. Albans, Mo," held in March of 1893, show that he was replaced as a director at that time.¹⁷

Heipertz ran the store until around the turn of the century, and at least part of that time he also served as the St. Albans postmaster. As the only place of business in the immediate vicinity, the store was a logical location for the post office, a status emphasized by a sign over the front door which read "St. Albans P.O." (See Figure 5. That sign would also have helped train travelers identify their location.) Heipertz took over the job of postmaster from Charles Becker in 1895, and retained the position until 1901.¹⁸ That combination of the positions of postmaster and storekeeper, which was quite common at the time, followed a long tradition. One historical account of general stores noted that "waiting for the mail" was "a country store memory reaching far back to ancient days when the recipient of the letter paid the postage and could not peek until willing and able to put up the rhino for postage due."¹⁹ Another pointed out the positive effect such combined duties had upon the merchant's standing in the community:

Every item of news, not only local, but from a distance,—as he is frequently the postmaster, and the only subscriber to the newspaper—has general dissemination from his establishment as from a common center; and thither all resort, at least one a week, both for goods and for intelligence.²⁰

The position of postmaster was also financially rewarding; early records show that the job in

¹⁷ Becker, p. 47.

¹⁸ Kiel, p. 217.

¹⁹ Gerald Carson, The Old Country Store, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) p. 119.

²⁰ John Beauchamp Jones *The Western Merchant*, Philadelphia, 1949, quoted in Lewis E. Atherton, "The Pioneer Merchant," The University of Missouri Studies: A Quarterly of Research, April 1, 1939, p. 7.

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1893 paid just over \$53, an amount equal to almost half of the annual rent for the store.²¹ Having the post office within the new store apparently increased the volume of mail handled locally; by 1899, Heipertz's salary as postmaster had risen to \$157.08, an amount that more than covered his annual rent on the property of \$110. That financial advantage continued into the twentieth century as well. A newspaper article published in 1931 included the following quote from then-owner and postmaster John Pfeiffer: "I'm Postmaster, here, you see and that brings me in \$3 a day and that's plenty for my wife and two daughters and myself."²²

In a typical small town twist, John Pfeiffer's father had also been a proprietor of the store. Becker's Day Book shows that the directors rented the business to John Pfeiffer's father, Ed Pfeiffer, in 1901, after agreeing "to buy the warehouses and counters & shelving of B. E. Heipertz...."²³ Ed Pfeiffer ran the store and served as postmaster for only two years, after which the business saw a variety of proprietors, including Charles Becker for a while in 1905, and August Hoerle, who had it from 1907-1909 or later.²⁴

In 1915, the Pfeiffer family once again became involved in the business, this time in an ownership position. An account in a local history notes that "John William Pfeiffer, son of Edward Pfeiffer, wishing to get control of the company, bought out the shares of stock in the store for \$100 from some; \$125 from others and \$250 from Charles Becker who did not want to sell."²⁵ That transaction marked the beginning of more than eight decades of Pfeiffer family ownership. John Pfeiffer moved into the store with his wife Ida (Idy) in July of 1915, and his daughter Mabel, who was called Mae, was born there five months later. Mae was to live her entire life in that building; she died there in June of 2002.²⁶

John Pfeiffer's desire to buy the property in the first place may have been boosted by the area's growing popularity with a select group of St. Louis residents. Sweeping river views, striking countryside and easy railroad access made St. Albans an attractive destination for city dwellers in search of a country retreat. About a decade before Pfeiffer bought the store, Charles Becker sold land in the area to Theodore Link, a German-born architect who lived in St. Louis at the time. Link

²¹ Kiel's book contains an extensive list of county postmasters, with notes as to their highest annual salary, and Becker's day book records the annual rent paid in the first few years of the store's existence.

²² "Boosts Store Price From \$5000 to \$50,000 in Row With Mrs. Oscar Johnson." Newspaper clipping from the collection of Thom Sehnert (Paper name and page numbers unknown.) July, 26, 1931.

²³ Becker, p. 52.

²⁴ Becker, pp. 78-81.

²⁵ Huger, p. 37. Huger notes that she got her information directly from John Pfeiffer, his daughter, Mae Head, and Charles Becker's records.

²⁶ "Memories of Mae: The Matriarch of St. Albans," St. Albans Village Voice Newsletter, Fall 2002.

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had a prominent practice in St. Louis at the turn of the twentieth century. He was, among other things, a member of the commission of architects for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, consulting architect for the St. Louis City Hall, and the designer of the St. Louis Union Station. He was also responsible for the designs of many St. Louis churches and private residences, including at least one large house on Portland Place which he designed for Oscar Johnson, the very wealthy head of the International Shoe Company.²⁷

In 1903, Link bought over a hundred acres of land just upriver from the St. Albans store from Charles Becker. He and his wife Annie immediately built a summer place, and as Lucie Huger put it, "they invited their family and friends to visit and enjoy the beauty of the countryside."²⁸ Oscar Johnson and his wife, Irene Walter Johnson, were frequent guests of the Links, and by the 1910s, they too, had begun buying land in the area. Their holdings would eventually grow to surround the tiny quarter-acre lot of the St. Albans Store with more than 7,000 acres.

Unlike the Links, who appear to have been interested only in enjoying a peaceful country retreat, the Johnsons had larger things in mind. By the time Oscar Johnson died in 1915, they owned 1,500 acres, which had been developed into St. Albans Farms. That farm was to dominate life at St. Albans for most of the 20th century. It was under the management of Irene Johnson, however, that most of the farm development occurred. A tribute to her which was published in the *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* shortly after her death noted that:

Early in the 1920s Mrs. Johnson became interested in developing the family farm of 7,500 acres around St. Albans, Missouri. Here she did scientific feed and grain farming, raised pure-bred hogs and prize winning Angus and Guernsey cattle, and operated a model dairy, the produce of which sold at a premium in St. Louis for many years. One of the largest dairies in the St. Louis area, it at one time supplied two per cent of all the milk used in the city....²⁹

Although Mrs. Johnson routinely hired professional managers to run the farm, she was active in its operation, and very interested in expanding her holdings in the area. It was under her management, for example, that the farm's acreage increased from 1,500 to 7,500 acres, and also under her supervision that several new buildings were constructed. Several of the larger buildings on the farm, including her personal residence, "the Studio", and at least two sets of stone barn complexes, were designed by Theodore Link. She also built several smaller frame buildings in the

²⁷ Huger, p. 47.

²⁸ Huger, p. 47.

²⁹ *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, April 1954, quoted in Huger, p. 55.

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area around the store, and developed Francis Becker's 1840s barn into the regionally prominent Old Barn Inn restaurant. In 1930 and 1931, she also began what she called the "Tavern Rock Development", laying out large house sites with scenic views.³⁰

Although the farm, which employed more than 80 people by the late 1920s, provided John Pfeiffer's general store with a good deal of business, relations between he and Mrs. Johnson were not good. Pfeiffer's small property sat right in the middle of her holdings, and she badly wanted to buy him out so she could tear down the store. He refused to sell at a reasonable price, turning down several offers made by Johnson and her representatives. There is even some evidence that he enjoyed making her life complicated.

The argument became so heated at one point that it merited a photo spread in a Wednesday issue of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, as well as a fairly long article a few days later in a Sunday morning issue of a St. Louis paper.³¹ The opening for the article sums up the situation:

Only a few rods from the modern colonial type country store opened recently on the 7000-acre estate of Mrs. Oscar Johnson at St. Albans, Franklin County, Mo., stands the weather-beaten general store of John Pfeiffer on his quarter-acre plot. His quarter-acre is all that mars the architectural harmony of the nucleus of Mrs. Johnson's Tavern Rock Development....For eight years Mrs. Johnson persistently has attempted to acquire the property, planning to tear down the store and outbuildings so that the artistic ensemble of her Barn Inn and other buildings may be perfected.³²

A letter Mrs. Johnson wrote to Pfeiffer in 1928 shows how much she valued property near the railroad stop, as well as a thinly-veiled distaste for the way Pfeiffer was running his little operation.

I was very sorry that we could come to no conclusion in regard to the purchase of your place. I offered what I thought was a better price than anybody else would think of giving....It has always been a matter of regret to me the I could not let you have some of the property around St. Albans, as your operations in having a store, including your residence, blacksmith shop, with gardens, chickens and possibly a summer garden cannot possibly be conducted on such a small place as you have, but as I have often told you that land is the most valuable that we have and it would be

³⁰ Huger, p. 53.

³¹ "Competition at St. Albans," St. Louis Post-Dispatch Daily Magazine, July 29, 1931, and "Boosts Store Price From \$5000 to \$50,000 in Row With Mrs. Oscar Johnson," (Paper name unknown) July 26, 1931. (Both clippings are in the personal collection of Mr. Thom Sehnert.)

³² "Boosts Store Price."

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impossible for me to give it up at a nominal price property that means so much to St. Albans Farms.³³

The 1931 newspaper article about their ongoing negotiations, or lack thereof, was based in part upon an interview with Pfeiffer. The article shows that although Pfeiffer had at one point agreed to sell his property to her for \$5,000 and move away, the deal was never finalized, and before Irene Johnson could get things settled, he took offense at actions taken by St. Albans Farms and raised his price ten times over. As noted in the article: "I want to say right out that I'm sore at Mrs Johnson," Pfeiffer said, speaking in a slow drawl, "and I wouldn't be surprised if she was sore at me. Wouldn't blame her a mite."³⁴

Pfeiffer apparently felt Johnson was trying to run him out of business through competition, first through a commissary for workers at St. Albans Farms which offered many of the same goods he carried in the store, and later by building the new "colonial type country store" close to his store. There was also a misunderstanding about him using the name of Becker for the post office which ended up with St. Albans Farms refusing to get their mail from him. As he told the reporter in 1931:

"It's been first one thing and then another, just ding dong all the time....She offered me \$8,000," he said, "and everything sounded smooth as could be. But I reckon I sort of upset things. I just stood up and I said 'Now I'm ready to sell out, lock stock and barrel, including my automobile, everything except my wife and daughters. But-you must pay for all the damage you have created. My price is \$50,000.' Well, sir, she just gathered her wraps about her and walked out of the room."³⁵

The proverbial immovable object had met an irresistible force. Pfeiffer kept his property, and his store business outlasted the one in Mrs. Johnson's new building by many decades. The proprietor of the new store had medical problems that prompted him and his family to auction off the contents of the store and move away within just a few years of its opening.³⁶

It was also John Pfeiffer who expanded the store building to its current form. Although Becker's early records include several careful notes about routine maintenance such as painting and plastering, there was no mention of an expansion. The building had definitely been enlarged to its present footprint by 1931, when it was photographed for the photo spread about the conflict

³³ Irene Johnson, Letter to John Pfeiffer, Becker, MO, from 29 Portland Place, St. Louis, Mo, June, 29, 1928.

³⁴ "Boosts Store Price From \$5000 to \$50,000 in Row With Mrs. Oscar Johnson."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Huger, p. 39.

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between Johnson and Pfeiffer.³⁷ That photo shows the side and rear additions, and the wrap-around front porch. The porch differed from its present appearance in that it had no cross gables and was supported by large triangular brackets rather than straight posts. The store even had gas pumps at the corner by then; those in the 1931 photo are of a different style, but in the same location as those in place today. Another photo of the general area said to date to "the 1930s" shows the back of the store property, including the rear addition on the building and the blacksmith shop, in its current form.³⁸ The addition has, therefore, been assigned a construction date of ca. 1930.

Pfeiffer also diversified the store business during the 1920s, adding a restaurant and bringing back the post office. The interview with Pfeiffer which was printed in the unidentified St. Louis paper in 1931 mentioned the restaurant, and the 1931 photo shows that a brief menu was posted outside the store at that time. Also, in 1922, Pfeiffer applied for and was granted permission to put the post office back in the store. The postal service would not let him use the name St. Albans, however, due to the similarity of a "St. Auberts" post office somewhere else. Pfeiffer therefore chose the name "Becker," which the 1931 article quoted him as saying was after "an old German settler hereabouts, Francis Becker."³⁹ (It was that confusion over the name that apparently led Mrs. Johnson to withhold St. Albans Farm postal business from the store.)

Pfeiffer operated the post office along with the store until around 1941, when his daughter, Mae Head, bought the store property from him. He continued as postmaster for another eight years, however, operating out of an old box car nearby.⁴⁰ Sometime before he retired as postmaster in 1949, the post office got its old name back, and following a flood in 1951, was moved to a newer building nearby. The St. Albans Post Office is still in service in the village today.

The purchase of the store by Pfeiffer's daughter Mae, began her notably long tenure as the shopkeeper. Mae, who was 26 when she bought the store, knew the property well, having been born and raised there. She was no stranger to work by then either, having worked since she was seventeen as a hostess at the Old Barn Inn. Her decision to buy the store from her father may have been spurred by her marriage to Clyde "Biggie" Head, which took place about the same time. The local history of St. Albans notes that Biggie "worked for a construction company, driving heavy equipment; Mae tended the store."⁴¹ The tradition of combining residential and commercial space continued under Head's ownership; she and her husband lived on the second floor of the building,

³⁷ "Competition at St. Albans."

³⁸ Huger, p. 86.

³⁹ "Competition at St. Albans."

⁴⁰ Huger, p. 31.

⁴¹ Huger, p. 37.

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while her parents occupied the ground floor rooms not used for store space.⁴² (The restaurant had apparently closed by then.)

Mae Head's purchase of the store also involved minor changes to the front porch, and a name change, to Head's Store. It has been assumed that Mae Head added the posts and cross gables to the porch about the time she took over; the sign she had made to reflect the name change is shaped to fit within the cross-gable over the main entrance. That sign was painted by an artist who had done a good deal of work for her father's old rival, Mrs. Johnson. The sign is the work of Frank Nuderscher, a prominent artist from St. Louis who did a good deal of graphic art for St. Albans Farms in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴³

Mae ran the store from the time she purchased it until her death in the summer of 2002. Under her management, the store continued to serve in a social as well as a commercial capacity, much as it always had. Back when the St. Albans Store Company owned the property, the store was the site of a variety of social functions, including regular meetings of the "Beer Drinkers Club." Members of that group included many of the men who had founded the company and built the store in the first place, including Charles Becker. Later, farm workers stopped by on their way home to sit by the pot-bellied stove and exchange news; as Lucie Huger noted "When we lived in St. Albans [ca. 1950-1978], the men who worked for St. Albans Farms met for a beer or soda in the store before going home at the end of the day."⁴⁴

Later yet, in the 1970s and 80s, the store became a favorite stop for tourists, including members of bicycle and motorcycle clubs in St. Louis. The tourists were drawn to the area by its striking scenery, and Mae's famous hand-made sandwiches. A St. Louis Post Dispatch article about the store which was written in 1986 claimed that "the Head sandwiches alone are worth the trip to St. Albans."⁴⁵ That same article noted that in 1985, Head was given a plaque by the St. Louis Bicycle Touring Society "for many years of kindness." The article also revealed that in 1983, the store was the site of a Playboy magazine photo shoot, which Mae agreed to, as long as there was no nudity involved.

By the time the 1980s Post-Dispatch article was written, St. Albans Farms had been shut down, and 5,400 acres of the original estate were for sale as a single parcel. The article shows that Mae, like her father in the 1930s, had no intention of selling out:

The entire rural estate, except for Mae Pfeiffer Head's country store, is for sale... 'I'll stay here until I die,' Mae Head said. 'The money wouldn't mean anything to me.'

⁴² Huger, p. 37.

⁴³ Huger, p. 37, 51-52, and 66-67.

⁴⁴ Huger, p. 39.

⁴⁵ John M. McGuire, "Country Store," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 28, 1986, p. 1E.

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Head was born in the store—let us simply say, at her request, that it was a long time ago—and she owns the property, a small independent pocket inside the sprawling Johnson estate.”⁴⁶

The estate sold not long after that article was published, and is today home to a golf course and several upscale residential developments. Head’s Store, by contrast, remains a constant. It is still an independent operation, and looks very much as it did when John Pfeiffer was squabbling with one of the richest women in St. Louis.

The store has been a prominent part of life at St. Albans since it opened in 1892. Local historian Lucie Huger wrote in 2001, that the “store has always been a meeting place and center of social life in the community.”⁴⁷ Modern convenience-store offerings may have replaced the cracker barrels and kerosene lanterns which once filled the aisles, but the physical form and general method of operation are today very much as they were in the 1930s. The building is a notably long-lived and highly significant example of a rural general store. ◻

⁴⁶ McGuire, p. 2E.

⁴⁷ Huger, p. 38.

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Verbal Boundary Description

A tract of ground in Franklin County described as follows:

A part of the Southeast fractional qr. in Section Three (3), Township Forty-four (44) North, Range Two (2) East of the 5th P. M., described as follows: Beginning at a stake 30 feet west of Charles Oelger's West line and 30 feet south of the railroad right of way, thence South 57degrees 30' west 100 links to a corner stone, thence south 50 degrees 30' East 250 links to a stake, thence North 57degrees 30' East 100 links to a corner stone, thence North 50 degrees 30' West 250 links to the point of beginning, as per survey of record in Surveyor's Record 6, page 7, containing 0.25 acres, more or less. (See also Figure One, Site Plan.)

Boundary Justification

The current boundaries are comprised of the same quarter acre parcel upon which the store was built in 1892. They also encompass all of the land historically associated with the store which retains integrity from the period of significance.

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

St. Albans General Store
3516 St. Albans Road
Franklin County, MO
Debbie Sheals
December, 2002

Negatives on file with Debbie Sheals 406 West Broadway, Columbia, MO 65205

List of Photographs

See photo key for description of camera angle.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. North corner (front) | 8. View from railroad tracks, with garage |
| 2. West corner | 9. Main entrance, north corner |
| 3. Southwest elevation, with lot and garage | 11. Counter, with shelves, post, and ceiling |
| 4. South corner | 11. Main store space and front doors |
| 5. Southeast elevation (back) | 12. Back storeroom and tin ceiling |
| 6. East corner | 13. Ground floor bedroom |
| 7. Northeast elevation | 14. Second floor room. |

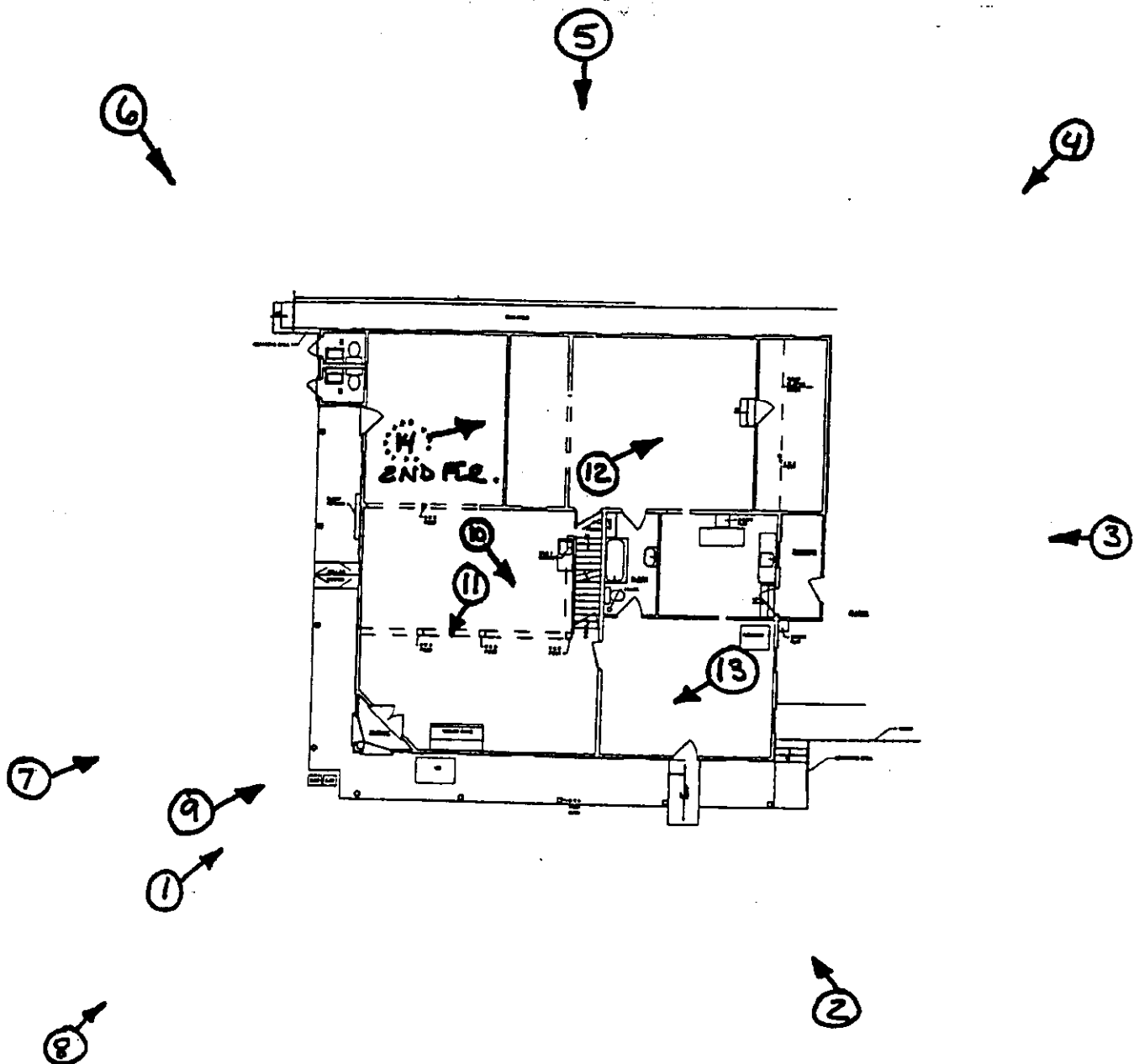
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Photo Key



ST. ALBANS
GENERAL STORE
3516 ST ALBANS
RD
ST. ALBANS
FRANKLIN COUNTY,
MO
15/694085/
4272305

ST. HUBAUS
FRANKLIN COUNTY,
MO

15/694685/
4272305

