

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Townley Metal & Hardware Company Building

other names/site number Cook Brothers; Kester International

2. Location

street & number 200-210 Walnut Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Kansas City ☐ vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64105

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.)

Claire F. Blackwell  
Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy SHPO

24 February 1994  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State of 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:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

☐ 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Townley Metal & Hardware Company  
Name of Property

Jackson, Missouri  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing facility

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone; brick

walls brick; cut stone

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Narrative Description

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

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## 9. Major Bibliographical 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

### Period of Significance

1895-1944

### Significant Dates

1895

1902

1907

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Kansas City Public Library; Priv. Coll.

Townley Metal & Hardware Company  
Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

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Zone Easting Northing  
2 

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3 

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Zone Easting Northing  
4 

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☐ 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 By

name/title Cydney E. Millstein and Linda F. Becker

organization Arch. & Art Historical Research date January, 1994

street & number P.O. Box 22551 telephone (816) 363-0567

city or town Kansas City state Mo. zip code 64113

### 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 MIMA Properties

street & number 201 Wyandotte Street telephone (816) 471-6789

city or town Kansas City state Mo. zip code 64105

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section number 7 Page 1 Townley Metal & Hardware Co. Building  
Jackson County, MO

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The Townley Metal & Hardware Company building, located at 200-210 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri, is a five-story, brick commercial building measuring 142 feet long by 174 feet, 2 inches wide. Situated to the north and east of the Old Town Historic District, the building is sited south of the Kansas City Southern Railway tracks and a gravel lot. To the east of the building is a 1912 commercial structure; to the west is the Kansas City Water Department building, constructed in 1904-1905. Adjacent to the south of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company building is a brick commercial building constructed in 1954.

Displaying Late Victorian characteristics, the building's design can best be described as influenced by the Second Renaissance Revival style due, in part, by the overall form and rhythm of the main facade. The arcade-like treatment at the second and third stories, the organization of the upper stories into distinct horizontal divisions emphasized by pronounced brick denticulation and cut-stone string coursing, and the variance in fenestration articulation all recall some of the distinguishing features of that architectural era.<sup>1</sup> Despite some reversible modifications to the exterior, the building's integrity of design, materials and workmanship has been retained in order to convey its historic identity and character.

The Townley Hardware & Metal Company building was erected in three separate building campaigns. The first unit, which comprises the north six bays of the twenty-two bay east facade, was constructed in 1895 and was originally four stories in height. A second building campaign, which expanded the width of the original building eight bays to the south occurred in 1902. In 1907, the building was again expanded another eight bays (n-s).<sup>2</sup> It is not entirely certain just when the height of the building was raised to five stories, but it is probable this occurred with the final building campaign.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See: Marcus Whiffen. American Architecture Since 1780 A Guide to the Styles. (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The M.I.T. Press, 1981), 154-158.

<sup>2</sup>Carrie Westlake Whitney. Kansas City Missouri and Its People 1800-1908. Vol III. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1908), 342. See also Sherry Lamb Schirmer & Richard D. McKinzie. At The River's Bend An Illustrated History of Kansas City Independence and Jackson County. (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1982) 348; Townley Metal Company photograph, Montgomery Collection, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City, Missouri Public Library.

<sup>3</sup>Research of the history of this company, at the time of this writing, has not revealed the exact construction date of the 5th story. While

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Jackson County, MO

Both the second and third story fenestration of the 1895 and the 1902 units are placed within a two-story arcade. Original one-over-one light, double-hung sash windows<sup>5</sup> which feature stone lug sills and flat segmental brick arch lintels at the first story and brick header lintels at the third story, are modified with wood infill, louvered windows, and metal vents. Fenestration at the second and third stories of the 1907 addition are modified with wood infill and louvered windows. Second-story fenestration is tripartite placed in rectangular frames with stone sills. Third-story fenestration, placed beneath blind arches, features a continuous sill course.

Fenestration at the fourth story of all three units feature segmental arched openings that are infilled with wood and louvered windows. Fenestration also features flat brick arched lintels with brick and

there are several historic photographs and illustrations of the Townley Hardware & Metal Company building, these references can only establish a circa date.

<sup>4</sup>See the 1912 and the 1931 editions of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company catalogue which include illustrations of the company's building. The alterations to the first-story are reversible.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. See also: Townley Metal and Hardware Company, "40th Anniversary Educational Trip". Kansas City, Missouri July 13 to 27, 1924. Brochure.

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cast-stone keystone. The original six-over-six double-hung, sash-type fifth story segmental arched fenestration<sup>6</sup> is modified with wood infill and louvered windows. A continuous cut-stone sill course rests below.

Additional features of the main facade include continuous denticulated brick and stone band coursing below the second story, as well as the fourth story fenestration. Resting above the fourth story windows is a continuous denticulated brick band coursing which visually supports a modest metal cornice. Continuous brick corbeling stretches above the fifth story below tile coping placed at the roof line. An historic (c. 1902-1912) metal fire escape is situated at the sixth and seventh bay (n-s).<sup>7</sup>

The eleven bay wide north facade of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company building originally featured segmental arched, one-over-one, double-hung, sash-type fenestration at the second through third stories and four-over-four double-hung, sash-type windows at the fifth story. With the exception of the windows at the fourth bay, these units are modified with wood infill and louvered windows. Original segmental arched fenestration at the first-story level is modified with plywood and/or brick. The multi-paneled overhead door at the third bay (w-e) and the wooden entry door at the sixth bay (w-e) are also non-original. The original height of the loading dock has been lowered at the east end to accommodate a dumpster. In addition, the original loading dock stairs located at the east end of the north elevation has been removed. The metal canopy which shelters the existing loading dock may be original.

The north elevation, like the main facade, also features continuous denticulated brick band coursing above the third and fourth-story fenestration. The cut-stone sill course found below the fifth-story windows at the main facade wraps around to the north elevation. Above the fifth story windows and below a parapet runs a corbeled band course. Tile coping crowns the parapet and period signage remains at all stories except the fourth. A portion of the stone foundation is visible at the east end. A non-original, five-story metal trash shoot at the third bay (e-w) empties into a non-original dumpster placed at the east end.

A one-bay unit, linking the Townley Metal & Hardware Company building with the Water Department Building at 201 Main Street, was built c. 1924 after Townley purchased the building in order to expand their

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. It is important to note that although the majority of the windows have been replaced, the openings, in general, remain intact. Therefore, the alterations are largely reversible.

7The metal fire escape is not shown in the illustration of the 1895 building.

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Section number 7      Page 4      Townley Metal & Hardware Co. Building  
Jackson County, MO

operation.<sup>8</sup> Although the first story of this addition is modified with a modern overhead door and wooden entry, the metal framed multi-paned fenestration at the second story is original. Overall, the integrity of this unit remains intact.

The rear or west elevation features original segmental arched fenestration with cut-stone sills at the 1895 and 1902 units (fourteen bays counting north to south). These windows are modified with the addition of wood infill and louvered windows. Original fenestration of the 1907 addition (eight bays counting south to north) features cut-stone sills and lintels. First-story fenestration at the center bays are tripartite. A cut-stone belt course runs above the first-story windows. Modifications to all windows of this 1907 unit include the addition of louvered windows and wood infill. Some of the stone lintels are infilled with brick and/or are damaged.

Original basement level fenestration of the west facade is infilled with brick and/or covered with wood. A stepped, brick parapet straddles the 1902 and 1907 additions. A metal paint booth exhaust system is also located at this elevation between the sixth and seventh bay (s-n).

The south elevation, which adjoins a modern brick building constructed in 1954, is partially exposed at the uppermost story and features tile coping at the roof line.

Interior

The interior of the Townley Metal and Hardware Company building consists of an office area (the northernmost unit), drastically modified from the original and open, unfinished warehouse space throughout the remainder of the building. Columns, supports and brick walls are exposed throughout these areas. Original segmental fenestration, partially visible at the first floor south wall of the 1902 structure, is infilled with brick.

Currently, there are proposed plans for the renovation of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company building. These plans are being prepared in accordance with the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* by Duncan Architects, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri, for the developer Waterfront Development, Inc. Once the proposed plans are completed, they will be sent to the Missouri State Historic Preservation Department for their review.

8\*40th Anniversary Educational Trip", n.p. This addition appears in a 1924 illustration of the Townley building that is included in this brochure. Although Townley had purchased the Water Department Building in 1919, the company did not take over the building until 1923-1924.



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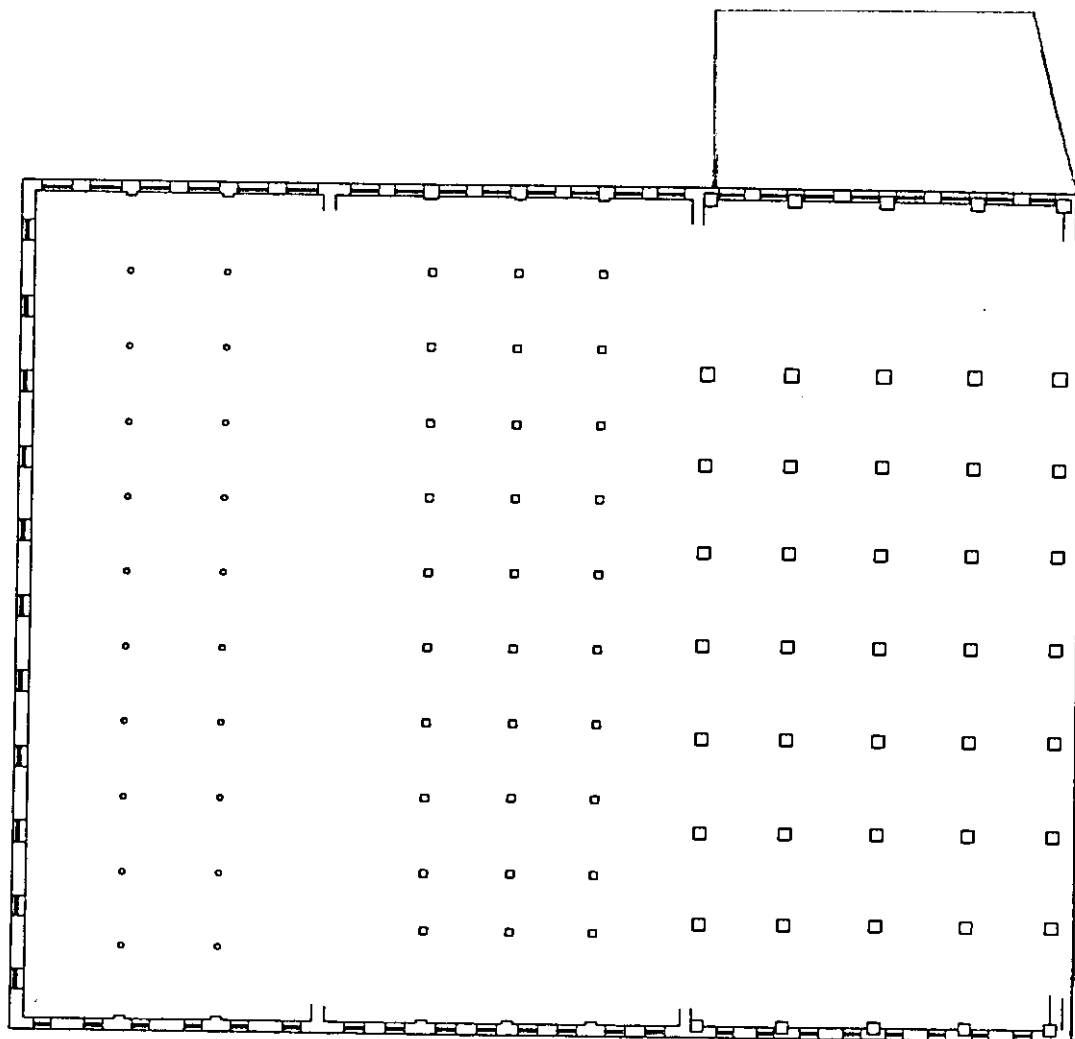
Section number 7 Page 5 Townley Metal & Hardware Co. Building  
Jackson County, MO

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FLOOR PLAN

All stories; not to scale

Source: Duncan Architects, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri, 1993.



Townley Metal & Hardware Company Building  
main or east elevation

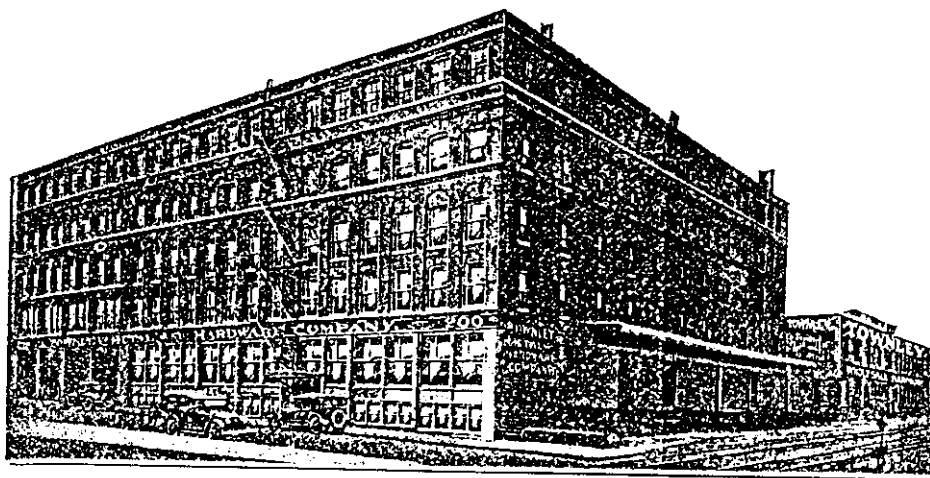
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Jackson County, MO

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Townley Metal & Hardware Company Building, c. 1931.  
Source: Townley Metal & Hardware Company Catalogue, 1931.

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The Townley Metal & Hardware  
Company Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Section number 7    Page 6A

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**Physical Description**

The description of the Townley Metal & Hardware Co. Building, as reported in Section No. 7, page 1 of the NR nomination referred to a brick commercial building constructed in 1954 and located adjacent to the south of the nominated facility. Since the listing of the property to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994, it has come to light that this building was actually constructed by the Townley Company to enlarge its existing facilities. This was confirmed by Allen Townley, the great-great grandson of the founder of the company and by a walk-through of the facility. The date of construction and owner were also recorded in an article published in a Blue Cross and Blue Shield publication *Brief* 15 (January 1969) entitled "Distinguished Record of Townley Company Dates to 1884 Here." It is clearly an addition to the northern, original building, which was constructed in three separate phases: 1895, 1902 and 1907.

As it stands today, the reinforced concrete, three-story warehouse addition features a partial basement and flat concrete roof (built-up) with a 10' parapet. It is set back from the three-part historic building. The main façade, facing east, features aluminum framed ribboned fenestration; the first and third story units are fixed and function as clerestories, while the second story windows are hopper units. The far north bays of the east façade feature paneled, wood overhead freight doors separated by concrete piers. The south façade features a single door at the far east bay. Fenestration is ribboned, aluminum-framed fixed over hopper units. The west façade of the building features minimal vocabulary to include third story multipaned industrial sash ribboned units. A single metal door is located at the far north bay. Due to the sheer simplicity of the design of the building and its scale and form, the 1954 annex does not adversely impact the original building and its historic additions.

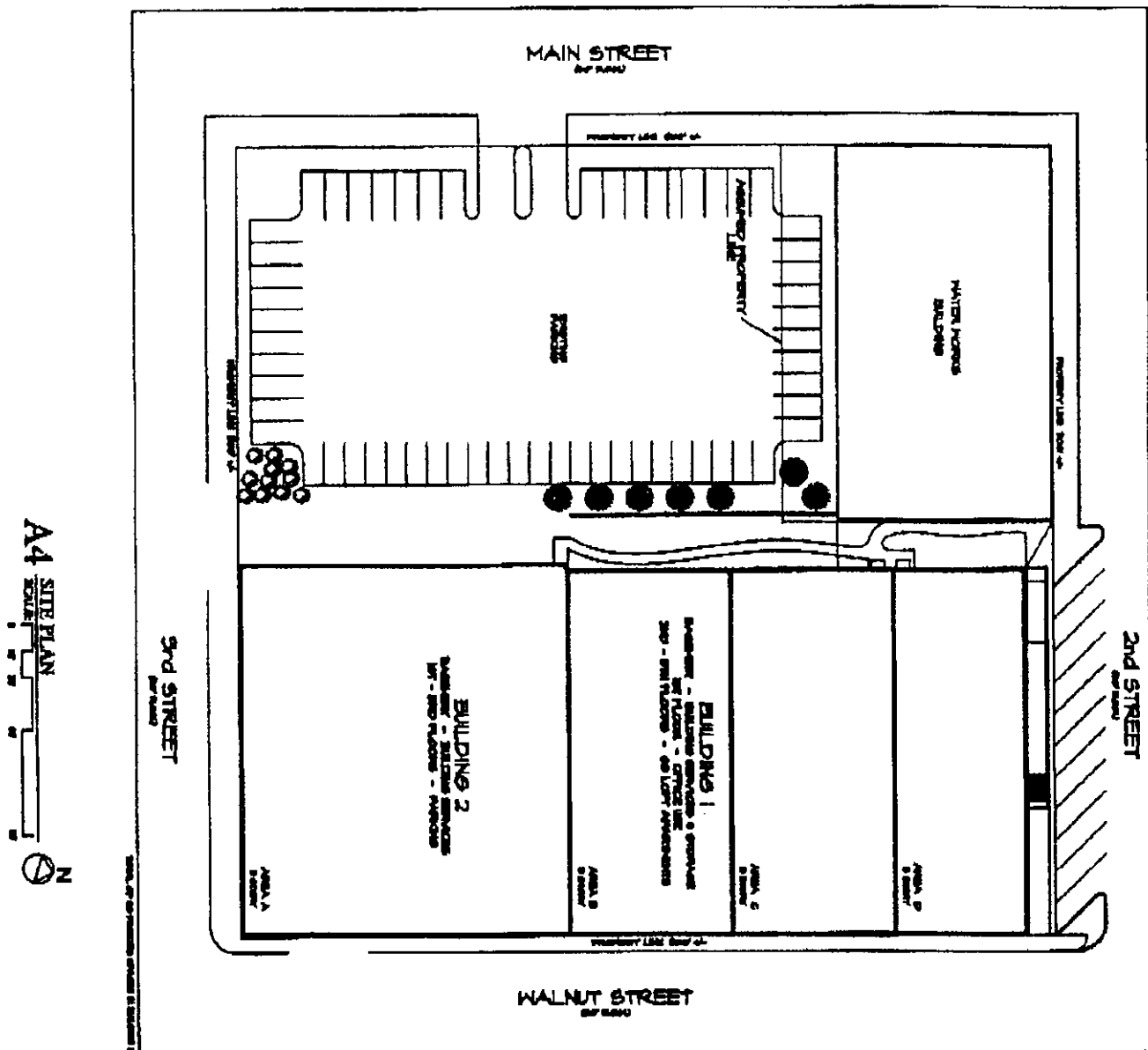
All interior floors of the addition features exposed concrete square columns. There are two openings per floor providing access to the buildings to the north.

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The Townley Metal & Hardware  
Company Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

Section number 7 Page 6B



SP1.1	TOWNLEY LOFT APARTMENTS	SITE PLAN	Townley Loft Apartments 200 WALNUT KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64106	DAI	DAI DUNCAN ARCHITECTS INC PO BOX 100000 KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64110 Telephone: 816-251-0000 Fax: 816-251-0001
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Section number 8 Page 7 Townley Metal & Hardware Co. Building  
Jackson County, MO

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SUMMARY:

The Townley Metal & Hardware Company building is significant for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and is significant in the following area: COMMERCE Constructed in 1895 (with additions in 1902 and 1907), for the Townley Metal & Hardware Company, the building is significant because it reflects the growth and fortunes of the business during its period of greatest expansion and prominence. Housed at this location for over seventy-five years, Townley Metal & Hardware Company is a representative example of the wholesale hardware jobbers trade which reached national prominence during the late 19th century. Because of continued success throughout its history, the Townley Metal & Hardware Company became known as one of the nation's largest wholesale hardware distributors. Both rural and urban retail hardware businesses relied on jobbers like Townley not only for their merchandise but used Townley's expansive location as a warehouse to house their own stock. Furthermore, as pioneers in their trade, James P. Townley I and his son, John M. Townley championed business ethics that the entire wholesale industry advocated. The period of significance is 1895-1944, the end date established by the arbitrary fifty year limit.

ELABORATION:

The building located at 200-210 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri, housed the third location of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company, a wholesale business which began in Kansas City in 1884. This building, constructed in three separate stages, best reflects the commercial significance of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company during its period of greatest expansion. Originally known as the J. P. Townley Metal Company, the tinnery supply firm was established by James P. Townley I, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>9</sup>

Born in 1848, James Philander Townley gained an appetite for the wholesale trade as a youth when he took a job as a shipping clerk for a stove foundry and later as a salesman for the same company. In 1873, at the age of 25, he moved to Terra Haute, Indiana where he entered into a partnership with C. C. Smith in the retail and wholesale stove and tin business.<sup>10</sup> After the death of the senior partner three years later,

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<sup>9</sup>History of Kansas City, 341; See also: At The River's Bend, 348; "Death of J. P. Townley", Kansas City Star, 18 January 1928, 17.

<sup>10</sup>"The Rise of the House of Townley", Implement & Tractor Trade Journal, Vol. XXXIX, No. 38. September 20, 1924, 52.

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Jackson County, MO

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Townley was joined by his brother, Harry P. Townley in partnership. The business was operated independently as the Townley Stove Company.<sup>11</sup>

Becoming disillusioned with the fact that their trade operation at Terra Haute was limited because of the competition from Indianapolis, Evansville, St. Louis and Chicago, James left Indiana in 1884 to establish a similar type of business in the west. He chose Kansas City as a location, because of the advice of a salesman in Terra Haute. "Townley, if I was footloose and looking for a business opening, I would go to Kansas City and put in a stock of tinner's supplies. It is the best opening I know of."<sup>12</sup>

With \$10,000, much of it borrowed, Townley came to Missouri, first visiting St. Joseph and then Kansas City. The day following his arrival to Kansas City, he leased a twenty-five foot storeroom at 302 Delaware and began business as the J. P. Townley Metal Company. From this storefront, he offered a limited stock of stoves, tinner's supplies and heavy hardware.<sup>13</sup> In March, 1885, the business was incorporated as the Townley Metal Company and by the end of its first full year of existence, the company had total sales of \$95,031.50 and a net profit of \$2,522.44.<sup>14</sup> As the company continued to grow, Townley moved his business to a four-story building at 216 Delaware he had constructed for that purpose in 1890. From this location, Townley maintained the sale of stoves, while expanding the inventory of tinner's supplies including hand made roofing plates.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Townley Hardware & Metal Company. "The Townley Salesman", February, 1908. n.p. Reprint of a speech by James P. Townley I at a salesman's dinner. Townley was about to open a wholesale stove business in St. Paul, Minnesota, but when the Grant Ward failure of 1884 startled the country, Townley changed his mind.

<sup>13</sup>"Today At Townley's", 1; Implement and Tractor Trade Journal, 53. Sited in the Historic Old Town National Register District, the building at 302 Delaware Street was built c. 1869 and originally housed the Morgan Drug Company. During its early history, several other businesses, in addition to the J. P. Townley Metal Company, were located at this address.

<sup>14</sup>At The River's Bend, 348;

<sup>15</sup>Townley Metal & Hardware Company. "Today At Townley's: A Scrapbook of Seventy Years of Service in the Hardware Industry", 1954, 1; Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Kansas City and Environs. (Chicago: Phoenix Publishing Company, 1892) 188; Historic Inventory NO. R 28, Townley Metal Company, 218 Delaware. 27 April 1977. Constructed by Schoen

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By 1892, as the trade of Townley Metal Company had extended beyond Missouri into Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma, James Townley sought larger headquarters for his operation. It is remarkable that in just two years after erecting his building, it was becoming apparent that Townley needed larger space to house his growing business. Looking no further than the riverfront area, Townley promptly purchased the northeast portion of Block 8 in Old Town (2nd and Walnut Streets) for his business. Three years later, in 1895, a four-story, red brick commercial-style office and warehouse, 50 feet wide by 140 feet deep, was erected.<sup>16</sup>

A marked shift in the business occurred in 1901 when James Townley made the wise decision to adopt a new corporate name, Townley Metal & Hardware Company, a title which reflected the changing nature of his operation. Instead of promoting the sale of tinware and stoves, the Townley Company began to emphasize hardware supplies.<sup>17</sup> At that time Wilbert Ferguson, who had joined the business in the early years, invested in the company giving Townley the extra capital he needed in order to develop a much expanded variety of hardware items.<sup>18</sup> In order to stockpile these new commodities, a five-story, eight-bay addition to the 1895 structure was constructed in 1902. Another substantial expansion took place in 1907 when the Walnut street frontage of the business was expanded to 202 feet. With this new addition, the storage capacity of Townley Metal & Hardware Company vastly increased to 1,875,210 cubic feet.<sup>19</sup>

Distributing to both urban and rural retail clientele throughout the Middle West, Townley stocked and sold an exceptional selection of hardware items from auger hole adapters, piston aligners, rifles, revolvers and refrigerators to cabinet locks, calcium arsenate, lightening arresters, coal hods, and stamped steel, round hollow handled

16"Today At Townley's, 1; "The Townley Salesman", n.p.; History of Kansas City, 342; At The River's Bend, 348.

17 Implement & Tractor Trade Journal, 55. The name change was reflected in the Kansas City, Missouri City Directory of 1902.

18"Today At Townley's", 2; At The River's Bend, 348; History of Kansas City, 342.

19 "40th Anniversary Educational Trip", 2; At The River's Bend, 348;  
History of Kansas City, 342.

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stove shovels.<sup>20</sup> Their inventory of tin goods, on the other hand, was discontinued by the 1920s, as tin declined in importance in the United States.<sup>21</sup>

The merited success of Townley Metal and Hardware Company, which continued through the end of WWII to the early 1980s, can be attributed to the talents and skillful guidance of the company's founder, James P. Townley I and his son John M. Townley. It was the elder Townley who had the foresight to enter into the industry at the time when there was a growing reliance of manufacturers on the full-line, full-service wholesaler. As American manufactures replaced imported goods in the market, from the 1860s through the 1880s, producers increasingly turned to the full-line wholesaler to distribute their output. American producers of manufactured goods turned from the commissioned agent to jobbers, like Townley Metal & Hardware Company, who became an important

<sup>24</sup>"Today At Townley's, 1; Implement & Tractor Trade Journal, 53.



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link between the American manufacturer of hardware and the retail trade.<sup>25</sup>

James Townley did not firmly establish himself in the wholesale hardware trade until after the depression of the early 1890s which had a particularly profound effect on the hardware industry. With so many retail firms folding, subsequently leaving jobbers with overdue accounts and unpaid bills,<sup>27</sup> it is quite conceivable that Townley waited until the hardware industry got back on its feet in spite of the fact that he had a prosperous concern and new headquarters with ample warehouse space. Another event that may have impacted Townley's decision was the formation and organization in 1895 of the National Hardware Association (N.H.A.) that led to the stabilization of the pricing of manufactured goods.<sup>28</sup>

By 1908, while Townley was forging to the forefront of their industry, some of their noted local competitors, i.e. Jacob Len & Sons, Atchison, Kansas; Shultz & Hosea, St. Joseph; Gille & Van Peyma and Kansas City Hardware Company, failed.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly, Townley's prosperity was due, in part, to the fact that James Townley (president of the company until

<sup>25</sup>William H. Becker, "American Wholesale Hardware Trade Associations, 1870-1900." Business History Review, Vol. XLV, No. 2. Summer, 1971, 180-181.

<sup>26</sup>At the River's Bend, 49-50. Railroads enabled metropolitan centers to invade the retail trade of country towns, i.e. the village hardware store. See: Lewis Atherton. Main Street on the Middle Border. (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1966), 229-231.

<sup>27</sup>Business History Review, 195.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 188.

29 "The Townley Salesman", n.p. These failures occurred when Kansas City was becoming a great jobbing center. Kansas City's commercial territory was the largest ever covered by any distribution point in the world. See James Donahue, comp. Greater Kansas City Official Yearbook. (Kansas City: n.p., 1905) 137.

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his death in 1928) and his son John Myers Townley believed very strongly in the rights of the retailer and lived up to a code of business ethics that was emulated by others in the wholesale hardware industry.<sup>30</sup> John, who had served as vice-president of the company from 1922 until his untimely death in 1926, was especially lauded for his influence in the trade because he "refused to accept orders which he knew were convenience purchases that would merely increase the retailers' competition".<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, John had achieved respect and recognition in the hardware profession nationwide as he was elected vice-president of the National Hardware Association in 1922. In 1924 and again in 1925, John was elected president.<sup>32</sup>

An interesting chapter in the history of Townley Metal & Hardware Company occurred from July 13-27, 1924, when John Townley organized a 2,100 mile excursion for thirty selected salesman of the company. This "Fortieth Anniversary Educational Trip" to twenty-six factories in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, was arranged in order to increase the efficiency of the sales force by experiencing, first hand, manufacturing methods and hardware distribution. Traveling by train, salesman were acquainted with brands of hardware sold by Townley, making it possible for them to more intelligently present those products to the retailer. Never before had a sales team visited such a large number of manufacturers.<sup>33</sup>

The later half of the 1920s through the Great Depression proved to be a period of turmoil for the Townley company. Both James I and his son John had passed away. In addition, an "accumulation of unprofitable decisions and enormous pressures for change in the wholesale hardware industry nationwide" stifled profits. In the midst of these troubled times, Richard F. Townley, second son of the founder, became president of the company in 1932. Richard kept the organization stable, while the

<sup>30</sup>Rivers Peterson, ed. "John M. Townley Dies", Hardware Retailer. July, 1926, 152. The Townley sales catalogue from 1912 states the company's sales policy in detail.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

32T. James Fernley, comp. Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the National Hardware Association of the United States. (Philadelphia, n.p., 1924), 92; Hardware World, 99; Hardware Retailer, 152; Implement & Hardware Trade Journal, 68; Hardware Dealers Magazine, July 1926, 52.

<sup>33</sup>George F. Massey, "Townley Men Travel in 'Factoryland'". Implement & Tractor Trade Journal. Vol XXXIX, No. 38. September 20, 1924, 16; "40th Anniversary Educational Trip", July 13 to 27, 1924. Itinerary.

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Townley reputation for service continued to grow into the next decade through 1944.<sup>34</sup>

Although the period of significance ends with the arbitrary fifty-year cut-off in 1944, it is important to note that Townley Metal & Hardware Company, in the early 1960s, was one of the founding distributors of the Sentry Hardware Corporation, a nationwide volume-buying and distribution system that provided local and national advertising and pooling of product purchases for wholesale hardware companies. Before the company was sold in March, 1982, Townley Metal & Hardware Company purchased a branch warehouse in Denver, expanding their stock from 28,000 to a total of 45,000 items and their territory to 13 states. Annual sales volume exceeded \$45 million.<sup>35</sup> Until the emergence of suppliers such as Builders Square in the 1980s, Townley retained its prominent role in the industry nationwide.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup>At The River's Bend, 348; "Today At Townley's", 3.

<sup>35</sup>At the River's Bend, 349.

<sup>36</sup>Loren O. Trout. Telephone conversation with Cydney E. Millstein, 6 December 1993. Trout was vice president of sales of the Townley Metal & Hardware Company, 1948-1963.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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The Townley Metal & Hardware  
Company Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Statement of Significance**

The Townley Metal & Hardware Company enlarged its facilities at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Walnut Streets by building a new general office space and adding a three-story building adjacent to its existing property in 1954. Townley occupied this building, along with their main facility to the north until 1982, when the business was sold. The date of the building's construction in 1954 is outside of the period of significance as listed in the original NR nomination.

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"Passing of J. M. Townley and R. P. Van Camp." Hardware World, July, 1926.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Jackson County, MO

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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The Townley Metal & Hardware  
Company Building  
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Verbal Boundary description:**

Lots 77 through 81, Block 8, PLAT OF THE TOWN OF KANSAS, commonly called "OLD TOWN," a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof, together with the vacated alley lying west of and adjacent to Lots 77 through 81 (which also lies east of and adjacent to Lots 82 through 86). The 1954 addition is located on lots 77 through 78.

**Owner of Record as of July 5, 2000**

Jeffrey E. Smith Investment Co., L.C.  
11000 Airport Drive  
P.O. Box 7688  
Columbia, Missouri 65205

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Old Town lot 79-81, Block 8, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, and vacated alley lying west end adjacent.

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Townley Metal and Hardware Company building, including the two-story connection to the east, constructed c. 1923.



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(PARKVILLE)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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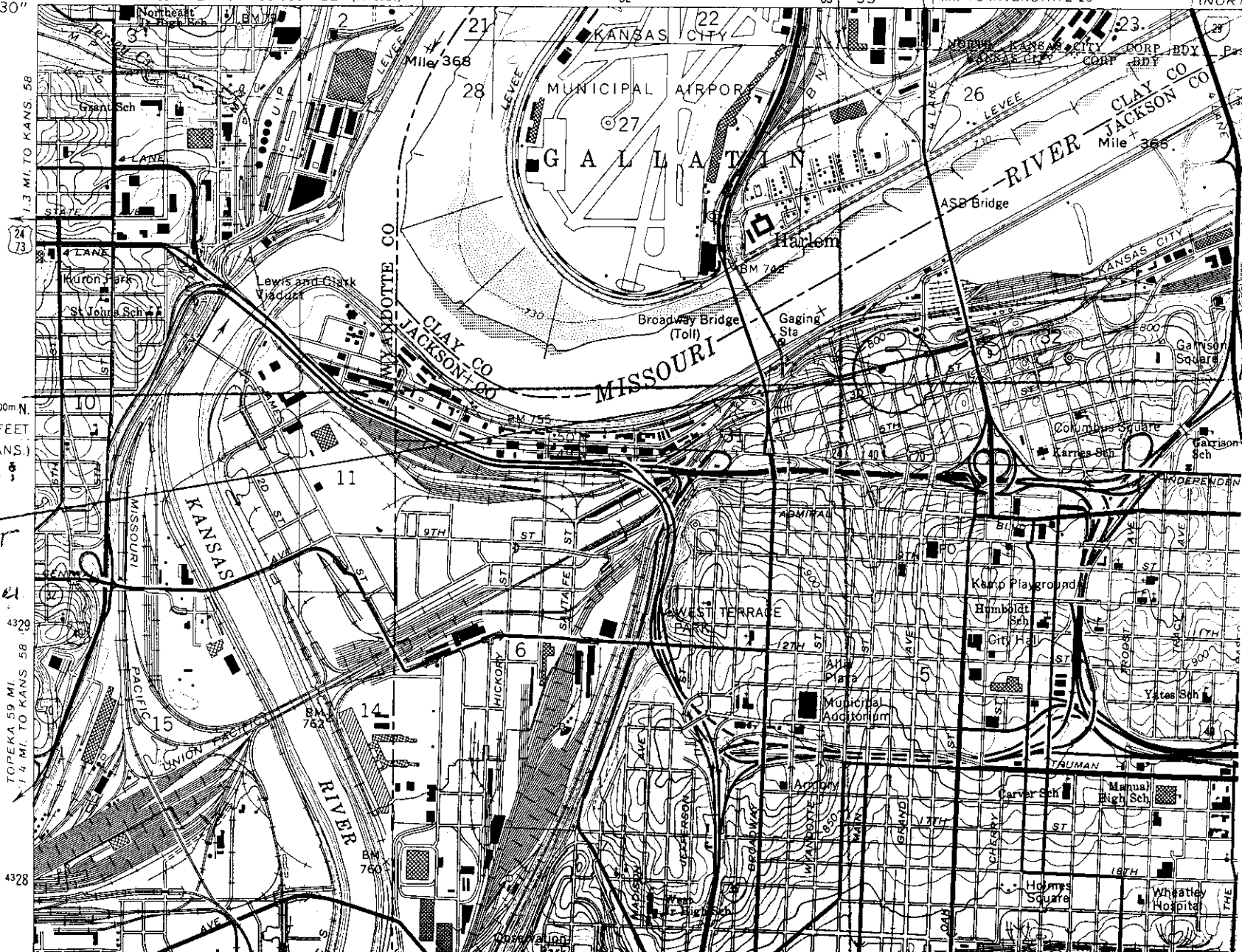
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TOWNLEY METAL &  
HARDWARE COMPANY  
BUILDING  
200-210 WILMUT STREET  
JACKSON COUNTY,  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

UTM REFERENCE:  
15/343060/4330190



**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **Townley Metal & Hardware Company Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **John Gutowski**

Date

Photographed: **Nov. 1993**

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

- 1 of 7. View looking SW, streetscape, E façade.
- 2 of 7. View looking W, E façade.
- 3 of 7. View looking SW, E façade.
- 4 of 7. View looking W & SW, E façade.
- 5 of 7. View looking NE, W façade.
- 6 of 7. View looking S and SE, N façade.
- 7 of 7. View looking W, interior first floor.







Cook  
Smithers









TOWNLEY

TOWNLEY METAL CO.

Wholesalers Supplies - Corrugated Iron - Steel I-beams - Roofing

TOWNLEY  
METAL AND  
HARDWARE  
COMPANY



