

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory

other names/site number Atkins Building

## 2. Location

street & number 1123 Wilkes Blvd. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Columbia [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Boone code 101 zip code 65201

## 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 .)

 3 June 02  
Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO 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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet <input type="checkbox"/> .	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet <input type="checkbox"/> .	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____ _____ _____	_____	_____

**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri**

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property      Category of Property**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |

**Number of Resources Within Property**

Contributing		Non-contributing		
1		0		buildings
0		0		sites
0		0		structures
0		0		objects
1		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**

INDUSTRY/ manufacturing facility

**Current Functions**

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Other: Factory

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Other: built-up roofing

other Wood

**Narrative Description**      See continuation sheet [ x ].

See continuation sheet [ ]

**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri**

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1907-1939

**Significant Dates**

1907

**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:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory**  
**Boone County, Missouri**  
**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	558680	4312420			
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 By**

name/title Debbie Sheals

organization Independent Contractor date March, 2002

street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779

city 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 Atkins Investments, Inc. (Contact: Pat Wilson)

street & number 1115 Wilkes Blvd. telephone 573-874-4000

city or town Columbia state MO zip code 65203

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National Register of Historic Places  
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**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory**  
**Boone County, Missouri**

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**Summary:** The Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory Building, at 1115 Wilkes Blvd., Columbia, Missouri is a large rectangular building with blond brick walls and a red brick foundation. It is three and one half stories tall and has a flat roof. It was constructed in 1906-1907, to serve as a shoe factory for the Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company, and it continued in that function until 1939; the period of significance thus runs from 1907-1939. The factory, which is a contributing building, is the only resource on the lot. The long narrow building sits at the intersection of Wilkes and Fay Streets, with the long side facing east, to Fay Street. All four elevations of the building are filled with rows of large, regularly spaced windows. The windows all have segmental arched tops and six-over-six wooden sash, and the vast majority of the early window sash and openings are intact. A one story ell on the north end of the building, which originally housed the boiler room, also has blond brick walls with a red brick base. A shallow three story tall addition on the west wall of the building contains stairs, restrooms and an elevator; it is early, but not original. The original industrial function of the building is still apparent in many of the interior spaces. Many areas still have exposed brick walls, heavy wooden posts and beams, and wooden floors, all of which are original. The main entrance to the building, which is in its original location, is set off-center on the east elevation; the entrance doors themselves are modern, as is a high open porch over the doorway. The only other modern alteration of note happened when the top edges of the front walls were rebuilt without the original shallow corbeled brick cornice. That change did not significantly affect the appearance of the building, and overall, the factory today looks very much as it did when it was Columbia's largest manufacturing plant.

**Elaboration:** The Hamilton-Brown factory sits on the northwest corner of the intersection of Wilkes Boulevard and Fay Street, in north-central Columbia. The factory is by far the largest building in the neighborhood. The adjoining properties contain a mix of modest residential buildings and modern commercial or industrial buildings. The properties directly east of it, across Fay Street, are all residential. Most of the houses there are small older houses which have a low level of integrity. The area to the south has a mix of older houses and newer commercial buildings. North and west of the factory are modern warehouses; most of those are one story tall, with metal sheathing and garage type doors.

The factory occupies a relatively small lot; the building measures roughly 50 feet by 285 feet, and the lot is 105 feet by 400 feet. (See Figure One.) The lot adjoins both Wilkes and Fay, and all open land around the building is paved. The areas near the streets are used for parking, and the back part of the lot serves as a drive between the factory and the neighboring warehouses. A short section of the railroad tracks which originally served the factory is still in place on the southern end of the lot. The lot is fairly level, with a slight slope to the south. The basement level of the building is more than half way below grade at the north end, while the south end has a street-level doorway into the basement. The factory building is the only resource on the lot.

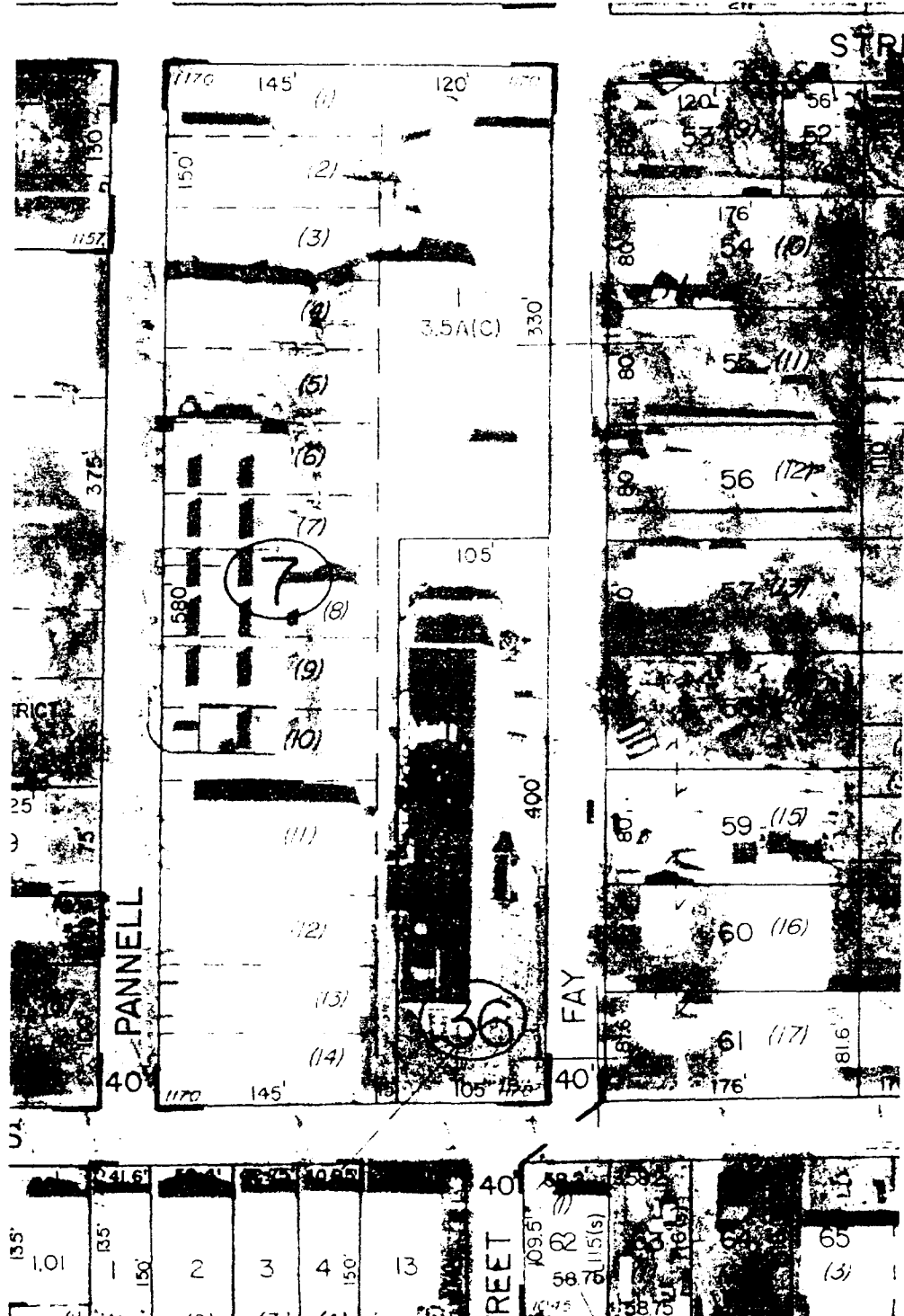
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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri

Figure One.  
Aerial-photo  
map of the factory  
and lot.  
From the  
Boone County  
Assessor's Office.  
The factory is beneath the  
number 36.



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**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri**

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The factory is a long narrow building, five times as long as it is wide. There are three full floors above the raised basement. The foundation and basement walls are constructed of hard red brick, while the upper portions of the walls are made of tan brick. The red brick base extends up to the top of the basement windows. The top edges of the walls, which had experienced severe deterioration over the years, were rebuilt a few years ago. The new top edges are constructed of very similar brick; the main change to occur at that time was the elimination of the original shallow brick cornice. That change is the only exterior alteration of note to have occurred in the last fifty years, and because the building is so large, the overall impact of that change upon its appearance has been minimal. (Compare the historic photo in Figure Three with the current photos submitted with this nomination.)

The windows of the building, which are highly intact, are a dominant feature. All four walls of the factory feature regular rows of large, closely spaced, double-hung windows. All of those windows, and most exterior doorways, are topped with segmental arches composed of double rows of sailor bricks. The window openings are five feet wide and seven feet tall, and set just over three feet apart. (See Figure Two.)

The six-over-six wooden window sash are very early, and probably original; they appear to be the same ones shown in several early photos of the building. A few of the window sash have been covered with solid coverings and a very small number have been replaced or removed; almost all of the openings themselves are intact. The basement windows align with those above, and are the same width. They vary in height, from less than three feet tall at the north ends of the side walls, to a full seven feet on the south elevation. The sash in the basement windows are similar to those above, and they also are very early or original. (See Photo 11.)

The building has two public entrances, both of which are original. There is one facing Fay Street, on the east wall, and one at the basement level on the south wall, which faces Wilkes Blvd. The doorway on Fay is the main entrance. Sanborn maps show that the east doorway has always been the primary entrance for the building. The entranceway now has modern doors, with tall transom lights, set into the original arched openings, and a modern wooden canopy overhead. That entranceway accesses the building in between the basement level and the first floor; stairs lead up to one and down to another. The stairs there now are newer, but in the same general configuration as those shown on the 1914 Sanborn Map.

Both the east and south elevations face surrounding streets, and both appear to have been designed with the public view in mind. (Most historic photos are taken of the southeast corner of the factory.) The other two walls, by contrast, appear to have always functioned as secondary elevations. The east elevation is by far the largest and most prominent, it is approximately 250 feet long, with a total of 28 window bays. That elevation has seen very few changes over the years; almost all of the window openings and window sash are intact. The only change to fenestration patterns can be found at the far north end of the building, where a modern loading dock and doorway have replaced two original windows.

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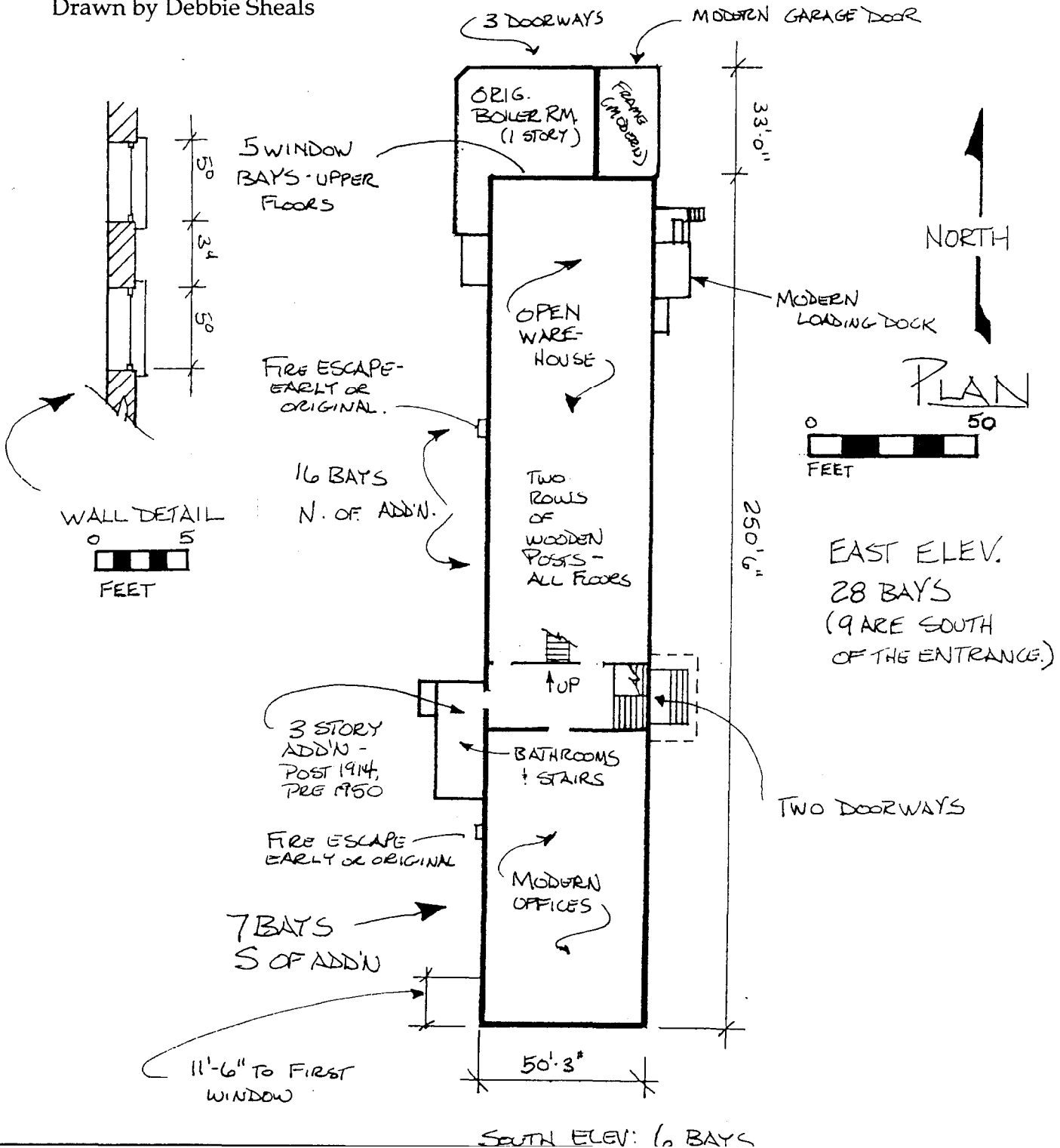
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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri

Figure Two. Sketch Plan, First Floor.

Drawn by Debbie Sheals





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**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri**

The east elevation of the building is much smaller. It is fifty feet wide and has 6 window bays on each floor. A wide original doorway substitutes for a window in the east center bay of the basement level. The doorway has a flat top, and all of the window openings have the same arched tops found elsewhere. All of the window openings are intact; one window opening has been partly framed in and given a new smaller sash, and a few other windows have been boarded over. Faint traces of early painted signs can still be seen on the south wall between the floors, and the front wall at the basement level has been painted white. (It was on the south wall that the Hamilton-Brown and later owners painted the company name.)

The long west elevation is less public. It was built to face a railroad siding, and today faces the paved drive between the factory and neighboring buildings. A shallow stair tower which is set off-center is early, but not original. It was not indicated on the 1914 Sanborn map of the building, but appears to have been added shortly after. The stair tower contains bathroom facilities as well as an enclosed stairway and elevator, and may have been added as a result of a poor health rating the factory received in the late 1910s. That addition is clearly well over fifty years old. The stair addition has two-over-two windows in arched openings which are similar to the other window openings, although much smaller. The walls there are also of red and blond bricks, in the same patterns found on the original building.

The west elevation retains two early or original metal fire escapes, as well as some brick corbeling along the top of the wall. Almost all of the window openings there are intact; several of the windows themselves have been covered with plywood, and one ground floor doorway has been bricked in, apparently many decades ago. A pair of small shed roofed frame enclosures on the north end of the building replace a larger frame warehouse which was in place when the building was mapped by the Sanborn Company in 1914.

The north end of the building is the least public of the elevations. A one story brick ell at the northwest corner of the main building was the original boiler room for the factory. That part of the factory is built of the same type of red and blond bricks found elsewhere. It has four doorways and no windows. Most of the doorways are boarded over, but have intact arched openings like those on the rest of the building. There is a small modern frame garage addition tucked into the space just west of the boiler room. The upper walls on the north elevation of the main building have six bays of windows like those on the south wall.

The interior of the factory contains a mixture of spaces and finishes. The south end of the first floor houses modern offices; the north end, a warehouse. The warehouse space looks today very much like it did when the shoe factory was in operation. The ceiling joists rest on long beams which are supported by two rows of square wooden columns topped with heavy metal collars. The walls are plain bare brick, and there is no woodwork around the windows. The floors are covered with simple wood flooring which is early or original. Early interior finishes and materials are also intact in several rooms of the upper floors. Those floors are used for storage, office space and even light manufacturing. A mandolin shop occupies space in the north part of the third floor.

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Boone County, Missouri**

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Overall, the Hamilton-Brown Shoe factory looks today very much as it did when box cars parked on the siding out back to be filled with new shoes. It has seen no notable alteration of form or patterns of fenestration, and is immediately recognizable to the period of significance. It exhibits a high level of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and provides a clear reflection of its original industrial function. △

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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri

**Summary:** The Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company building, at 1115 Wilkes Boulevard, In Columbia, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A, in the area of Industry. The building was built over the winter of 1906-1907, and went into use in 1907. It served as a Hamilton-Brown shoe factory from then until 1939; the period of significance thus runs from 1907-1939. The large factory building, which is intact and a contributing building, is the only resource on the property. The Columbia plant was built early in a period of decentralization of shoe manufacturing in the state. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all of the major shoe manufacturers in St. Louis, including Hamilton-Brown, began locating new plants in outstate communities to save labor costs. The Columbia factory was the first facility that Hamilton-Brown, which was at the time the largest shoe manufacturing company in the world, operated outside of St. Louis. It was also the first large-scale industrial facility of any kind to operate in Columbia, and the largest, and often only, industrial operation in the community for most of the period of significance. The factory building today provides an intact, highly significant link with Columbia's early industrial history.

**Elaboration:** Columbia is the seat of Boone County, and the largest town in central Missouri. The town was laid out in 1821, the same year Missouri became a state. It was soon after designated as the seat of government for the new county of Boone, which had separated from Howard County in 1820. The original plat for the city included nearly 400 lots, laid out in a standard grid pattern, with generously scaled streets, and land set aside for public use. Public land included space for a college just south of that early plat. (The shoe factory building is located north and a little east of the original core of the city.) In 1842, Columbia became home to the state University, an event that firmly established the community and spurred additional development. Education continued to play an important role, and by the middle of the century Columbia had become home to two female colleges as well as the University. Commercial and residential development kept pace, and the town developed steadily; the population grew from 600 in 1850 to over 5,000 in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

Transportation networks also played a role in early development, although not as prominently as did education. Columbia was located on major trails very early on, and was later served by Missouri's first cross-state highway system. The community also had access to rail service, although only via branch lines; it has never been a stop on a major route. The first branch railroad line, in 1867, connected the city to the North Missouri Railroad Line (later the Wabash) at Centralia. In 1897, a second branch to the south provided access to McBaine and the Missouri Kansas and Texas Line.

That lack of mainline service made the city less attractive to industrial concerns, and left it somewhat isolated during the railroad boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s. As one local history noted, a lack of direct rail service "meant the city did not attract the factories of large corporations

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<sup>1</sup> Census figures, cited in Columbia, the Heart of America, (Columbia, MO: Columbia Commercial Club, ca. 1922.)

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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri

or the immigrants who might have worked in them. Essentially without industry, the city retained its character as a quiet residential community founded upon education."<sup>2</sup> That quiet character did not mean a lack of growth, however. The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a period of marked development; the population of Columbia nearly doubled between 1900 and 1910.<sup>3</sup> It was during that growth spurt that the Hamilton-Brown Shoe factory was established.

By that time community leaders had been working for decades to attract industrial concerns, generally to no avail. As early as 1869, interested parties discussed establishing an "Immigration Society" to lure workers to the town, and in the 1870s, the city government established special tax advantages for new industry. But, as one source noted, "until World War II, such efforts, with one exception, came to little. The exception was the establishment of the Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company factory in 1906-1907."<sup>4</sup>

The Hamilton-Brown Shoe factory in Columbia was the first Hamilton-Brown factory ever built outside of St. Louis, and the first assembly-line mass production facility to be established in Columbia. The factory project was a group effort; the locally based Columbia Commercial Club raised funds for the land and factory building, and agreed to install a railroad siding to connect to the Wabash Railroad line.<sup>5</sup> In return, Hamilton-Brown promised to operate the factory and keep a certain number of local residents employed for at least ten years. The agreement stipulated that if the company met the conditions, the Commercial Club would deed the building to the shoe company at the end of that term.<sup>6</sup> Such an arrangement was seen as a win-win situation; the community got a guaranteed source of employment, and the shoe company was able to set up a new facility with minimal capital outlay.

The money for Columbia's side of the bargain was raised in just two months by the Columbia Commercial Club, which was, as the name implies, dedicated to promoting commercial development in the community. The Club was founded by a group of prominent local businessmen in March of 1906, just a few months before Hamilton-Brown contacted them about a potential shoe factory deal. The new organization enthusiastically took on the challenge of raising the money and arranging for construction. As one account noted, the "Club spearheaded an intense and successful drive to raise the money in September and October, and workers erected the factory building at

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Havig, Columbia: An Illustrated History, (Windsor Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc, 1984) p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Columbia, the Heart of America.

<sup>4</sup> Havig, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Havig, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> "Deed To Factory Given", Columbia Missourian, January 26, 1917, p.1.

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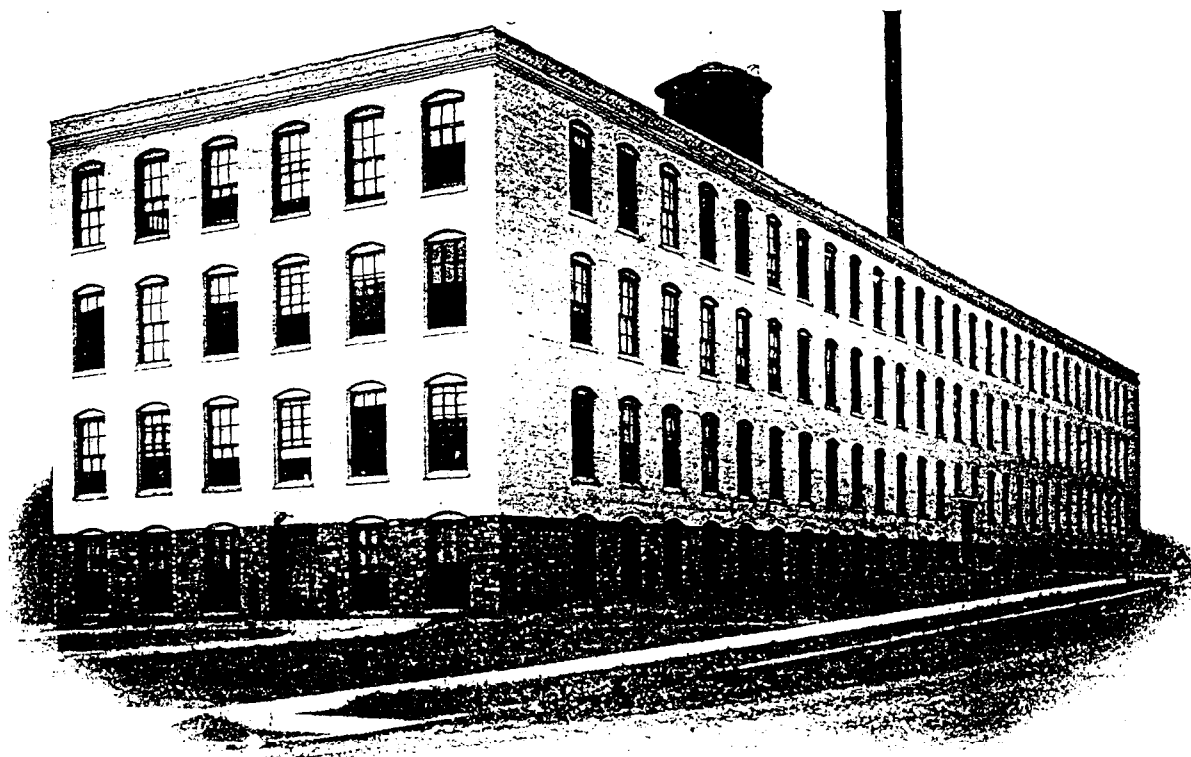
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**Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri**

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Wilkes Boulevard and Fay Streets during the winter."<sup>7</sup>

**Figure Three. Photo of the Factory Which Was Published by the Commercial Club in 1910.**  
From the Columbia Commercial Club publication, "Columbia, the Coming City of Central Missouri," (Columbia, MO: Statesman Publishing Company, 1910) page 69.



HAMILTON-BROWN SHOE FACTORY.

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<sup>7</sup> Havig, p. 43.

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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
Boone County, Missouri

That project began a long and fruitful history of public service for the Commercial Club, which later became the Columbia Chamber of Commerce. A Commercial Club publication boasted in 1912 that the club was "the most effective organization of its kind in any city of four times Columbia's size in the state, and it has accomplished things little short of wonderful."<sup>8</sup> In the same publication, the Club claimed credit for major roles in paving many streets in town, building a municipal water and light plant, and continuing its work to bring industry to Columbia.

Those claims were not idle boasts; several newspaper articles from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century repeat those credits, and include information about other Commercial Club projects, many of which were to have very long-lasting impacts upon the town. The paper reported several times on the club's successful efforts to ensure that the new cross-state highway would come through Columbia in the 1910s. The Columbia Missourian reported in 1918 that it was largely due to the efforts of the Club's members that "the State Highway follows the Old Trails Road, passing directly through the center of Columbia."<sup>9</sup> That highway is now Interstate 70.

Other notable Club achievements in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century included getting downtown railroad stations built for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, and the Wabash railroads, and promoting the construction of a new county courthouse and a large new downtown hotel. All of those buildings have survived, and are among the most intact historic resources in the downtown area today. Two are now municipal facilities. The Wabash Station now serves as the city bus station and public transportation hub. The hotel, which opened in 1917 as the Daniel Boone Tavern, remained in operation until the 1970s, and the building is now the headquarters for the City of Columbia.

The deal between Hamilton-Brown and the Commercial Club was typical of the interactions between St. Louis shoe companies and the rural communities which housed many of their factories. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, St. Louis shoemakers underwent a decentralization program, in which they moved much of their shoe production out to small communities in the surrounding countryside.<sup>10</sup> The St. Louis companies preferred the low labor cost and scarcity of union organizers that the small towns offered. In addition, outstate communities were often in need of new industries and, like Columbia, were willing to offer special incentives or "bonuses" to the companies in exchange for a promise of employment for their citizens.

Such arrangements allowed the St. Louis companies to establish factories with little financial

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<sup>8</sup> Columbia Commercial Club, "We Are Building a City in Columbia," (Columbia, MO: Statesman Publishing Company, ca. 1912) n.p.

<sup>9</sup> "Columbia Commercial Club Gives Aid," Columbia Missourian, May 6, 1918, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Rosemary Feurer, "Shoe City, Factory Towns: St. Louis Companies and the Turbulent Drive For Cheap Rural Labor, 1900-1940", Gateway Heritage, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall, 1988. pp. 2-17.

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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
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risk. An early study of that trend shows that the Columbia deal was typical; "Of central importance to the manufacturer's exodus to the countryside was the ability to move at no cost. St. Louis shoe companies did not pay the cost of setting up a factory outside the city.....Often subsidies provided everything the shoe company needed to set up operations except the machinery. This typically included land and a factory equipped with electricity and sidewalks."<sup>11</sup>

The "bonus system" became extremely popular with Missouri shoe manufacturers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1939, 46 different shoe companies had received such bonuses from small Missouri communities, for a total value of \$2,889,700.<sup>12</sup> The deal which brought Hamilton-Brown to Columbia was the first such arrangement made by that company. A 1930s study of the bonus system among Missouri shoe producers found that Hamilton-Brown participated in 11 bonus arrangements by 1938, with a total financial benefit of \$370,000.<sup>13</sup> Most of those deals were made later, however, in the 1920s and early 1930s. The arrangement with the Columbia Commercial Club in 1906 was the first and only such deal made Hamilton-Brown made that decade.

The Columbia factory was also the first Hamilton-Brown factory ever built outside of St. Louis under any conditions, and it was still the only outstate Hamilton-Brown factory in operation in 1910. It was important enough to the organization that the co-founder of the company, A. D. Brown, visited there in 1910. An article published in the local paper in July that year noted that:

When A. D. Brown was in Columbia recently to inspect the Hamilton-Brown shoe factory, he expressed himself pleased with the management, and declared it was his intention to make it one of the biggest factories in the state...The company employs about 300 hands and turns out nearly a million dollars of shoes a year. It is the only Hamilton-Brown factory outside of St. Louis.<sup>14</sup>

The Hamilton-Brown Shoe company, which was founded in 1872, was one of the nation's top shoe producers by the turn of the century. It was the largest shoe company in the world at the time the Columbia plant opened, and remained so at least into the early 1910s.<sup>15</sup> The factory was founded in St. Louis by J. M. Hamilton and A. D. Brown, with, as a company history put it, "little

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<sup>11</sup> Feurer, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> From Carl Wilburn McGuire, "Economics of the Community Bonus System With Special Reference to the Missouri Boot and Shoe Industry," (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Missouri--Columbia, 1939) p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> McGuire, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> "Shoe Factory May Be Enlarged," Columbia Herald-Statesman, July 29, 1910. The proposed enlargement, which was apparently contingent upon improvements to the transportation system, never happened.

<sup>15</sup> Havig, p. 41, and Feurer, p. 5.

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Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
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capital save character and indomitable energy," and less than 25 employees.<sup>16</sup> By 1910, the company, which was then headed only by Brown, employed a total of 6,000 people and produced some 60,000 pairs of shoes per day. Hamilton-Brown shoes could be found in all parts of the world; one company history noted that "Wherever men and women wear shoes—whether amid tropical climes or the icebergs of the far off Northland—there you will find smiling salesmen of Hamilton-Brown selling shoes..."<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Brown had a lot of competition in their home city. St. Louis was the center for shoe manufacturing in Missouri and a national leader in the industry throughout the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Census of Manufacturers figures show that St. Louis was in the top five shoe producing cities in the nation between 1904 and 1914.<sup>18</sup> Another source estimated that by 1934, one in every three shoes worn in the country were made by St. Louis firms.<sup>19</sup>

That national prominence was achieved in part at the cost of good labor relations; the St. Louis companies could be cold-blooded when faced with talk of labor unions or workers rights. Because the bonus system allowed the companies to establish outstate factories with very little cost to the corporation, and it was easy for them to simply stop production if labor unrest threatened. When faced with talk of a strike in 1933 at a Cape Girardeau factory, for example, F. C. Rand, International Shoe Company's president at the time, issued the following statement: "We operate 44 factories over the country and when the employees start to tell us how to run our business we will close them down."<sup>20</sup> Although complete abandonment of factories was rare, production was often slowed and employees laid-off when union organization threatened.

Although Hamilton-Brown apparently had much better employee relations than did International Shoe, there is evidence that at least one of their managers held a similar view. The Columbia Missourian in May of 1916 published the following quote from an official at the Columbia plant: "We don't care what the Missourian says. We don't care whether there is a factory here or not—there are plenty of other towns that want one."<sup>21</sup>

That manager was responding to a series of articles in the local paper about health conditions

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<sup>16</sup> "Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company," in "Columbia, the Coming City of Central Missouri," (Columbia, MO: Statesman Publishing Company, 1910) p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> W. M. Steuart, Census of Manufactures: 1914 Volume II, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919) p. 688.

<sup>19</sup> Feuer, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Shoe City, Factory Towns", p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Columbia Missourian, May 23, 1916.



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in the factory. Those accounts paint a rather grim picture of early working conditions there. A visit to the plant by members of the "Charity Organization Society of Columbia" resulted in a scathing review of working conditions, accompanied by an estimate that two-thirds of all tuberculosis cases in the city were originating in the shoe factory. One of the visitors, a nurse, was quoted as saying Tuberculous persons should not be permitted to work in the factory because they spit on the floor and others inhale the germs with dust and become infected with the disease...I never saw so much careless expectoration as there is in the shoe factory. While I saw many signs warning the workers to be careful with their work, I did not see one warning them against spitting on the floor. I do not see how human beings can stand it. When I visited the factory in December the air was sickening.<sup>22</sup>

Working conditions for women at the time were particularly poor. A follow-up article to the first report quoted a student who had worked there earlier as saying

The statement of conditions at the Hamilton-Brown Shoe factory as reported in the *Missourian* is absolutely true, except that the conditions are really worse than pictured....I feel especially sorry for the young girls and women who work there. They have no seats or benches to use when they want to rest. They have no wash rooms or places to dress.<sup>23</sup>

Another woman who had toured the plant with the nurse noted that

the air in the shoe factory is so vitiated with leather dust, wood alcohol and paint, or whatever it is that they use to polish and dye the leather, that I am told that women can seldom stand to work a full day there until they get used to the air...<sup>24</sup>

It appears that the visiting nurse's inspection and the related poor press had a positive affect upon working conditions in the Columbia factory. Newspaper accounts show that the factory had a new manager, W. H. Braselton, by September of the same year, and in December, the average work day was cut from ten hours to nine, and all workers received a five per cent raise. The factory was given a much more favorable evaluation in January of 1917, after being toured by members of the Commercial Club. The local paper reported then that the committee "states that it has visited the plant in person and finds that it is being run in a clean and sanitary manner and that it highly

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<sup>22</sup> "Columbia's Health Menaced by Shoe Factory, Nurse Says," *Columbia Missourian*, May 21, 1916, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> "Student Tells of Factory," *Columbia Missourian*, May 23, 1916, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> "Columbia's Health Menaced by Shoe Factory, Nurse Says."

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commends the present management."<sup>25</sup> It may have been about that time that the bathroom and stair addition was added to the west wall of the building.

The Commercial Club tour was done in preparation for deeding the factory building to Hamilton-Brown, per the original agreement. Those men found that the company had operated more or less according to the original agreement, and that they had employed an average of more than 300 workers at a time for most of the previous ten years. (Original estimates of an average workforce of 600-700 were found to have been "overestimated.") In January of 1917, the Columbia Commercial Club signed the property over to Hamilton-Brown.<sup>26</sup>

Other news reports from that time period reveal an almost beneficent attitude towards the shoe factory workers. As early as 1910, the company was offering its employees a savings plan that paid the impressive rate of six percent interest.<sup>27</sup> The factory was also the site of a lecture series hosted by the local Y.M.C.A. in early 1911. The local paper reported on January 25, 1911, that the "third meeting of the employees of the Hamilton-Brown shoe factory for instruction in social questions" had gone well, and that attendance was growing. It also noted that the "meetings at the Hamilton-Brown factory are held on the first floor among the piles of shoes. The employees are free to come and go but there was little interruption."<sup>28</sup>

Conditions were especially good under the management of W. H. Braselton, who ran the plant from 1917 into the 1920s. The Y.M.C.A. again became involved just after Braselton took over, with the introduction of night school classes, taught by graduate students from the University. Shoe factory workers between the ages of 25-50 attended weekly classes in English and Mathematics. Also, about a year after Braselton took over, the factory set up an in-house grocery store exclusively for its employees. Braselton was quoted as saying that "we will install a staple line of groceries and sell them at cost to the employees. It must be understood that this is for the benefit of the employees only. No outside trade will be allowed."<sup>29</sup>

A description of life at the plant which was written in the spring of 1921 paints a glowing picture of working conditions at the factory. That article noted that "the factory is well-lighted and on the whole employees seem satisfied with their work. There is little of the strained expression seen so often among factory men and women in the larger cities and the attitude of a big family is

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<sup>25</sup> "Deed to Shoe Factory Given," Columbia Missourian, Jan. 26, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Deed To Factory Given," p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Havig, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> "Interest in Social Meetings at Factory," Columbia Missourian, January 25, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Groceries at Cost for Its Employees," Columbia Missourian, October 4, 1917, p. 1.

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maintained."<sup>30</sup> The article included descriptions of Friday night dances on "the big cutting room floor..." during which a "piano and Victrola furnished music for dancing. The socials were managed by a committee of employees and chaperoned by a woman foreman or some foreman's wife." It also noted that employees were given an hour lunch break, during which time many chose to go to their nearby homes for their noon meal, and that Christmas bonuses had been given out the last two seasons, with the note that "this is not a settled custom."

The company also gave employees the rather surprising bonus of at least one paid vacation. In June of 1920, they announced that all 320 employees of the factory were scheduled for a ten day paid vacation. "This vacation is not due to a shortage in leather as many people suppose," said Braselton, "Our employees have not had a vacation since January 1 and we give them this rest to prepare for the busy season."<sup>31</sup> Braselton also noted that although there had been a slump in shoe sales, the Columbia plant would not be seriously affected.

He may have been overly optimistic in that statement (or simply putting up a good front). An article written less than a year later revealed that the workforce of the factory had been reduced by nearly 50 percent. The employment of the factory in April, 1921 totaled just 178. (Ages ranged from 16 to 50 and 78 of those employees were women.) Sales and production rebounded after a couple of years, though, and by 1923, employment was back to a much more typical 369 people. Various historical accounts show that the factory's staff totaled 300 to 350 for most of its period of operation, with a daily output of 2,000 to 3,000 pairs of shoes each day.

The standardized assembly line process by which those shoes were made was typical of the shoe industry in the early 1900s. The Columbia factory was established relatively early in the history of mechanized shoe production in Missouri, and operated much like other shoe factories of the period. Although shoes have been produced in America by the factory system since the mid 1700s, large-scale mechanized production did not become widespread until around 1900, just a few years before the Hamilton-Brown plant opened in Columbia.

The first American shoe factory was established in 1750, by John Adams Dagyr, in Lynn, Massachusetts. Before this time, shoes in America were custom made, often in small shops or by traveling cobblers. Dagyr's shop was the first to produce unordered shoes for stock and to operate on a factory system, where each worker performed a single operation in the production process.<sup>32</sup> Similar "factories" became common, but even though the production system was new to the trade, the hand techniques used to make the shoes had changed little over those of the previous centuries.

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<sup>30</sup> "Local Shoe Factory Plans for Employees Welfare and Comfort," Columbia Missourian, April 26, 1921, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Vacation for 320 at Shoe Factory," Columbia Missourian, June 24, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> International Shoe Company, Shoes Through the Ages, (St. Louis, MO: International Shoe Company, ca. 1950.) p. 16.

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Mechanization came to the shoe industry in the nineteenth century. During the 1800s, several machines were invented which made large scale mass-production viable. The first advance came in 1818, when the Kimball-last allowed shoemakers to produce right and left shoes, rather than the interchangeable sets previously utilized. Advances in leather processing about the same time included a rolling machine and a device which could split hides to a uniform thickness. In 1848 the sewing machine was invented by Elias Howe; it was adapted for shoe making by John Nichols, and perfected by Isaac Singer. In 1858, Lyman Blake invented a machine to sew soles to shoes. Blake eventually sold his rights to Col. Gordon McKay, who perfected it and later marketed it to shoe manufacturers.<sup>33</sup>

McKay enticed manufacturers to try his machine by offering it to them on a royalty basis, in which he got a share of their profits from increased production rather than a flat fee up front. McKay further improved efficiency, and his profits, by offering the services of trained mechanics to repair his machines as needed. This allowed small producers to try new equipment and is credited with greatly encouraging the adoption of mechanization. By 1890, the advantages of mechanized production were accepted enough that owners were buying equipment outright. However, outright ownership meant no service agreements, and the lack of trained mechanics became a problem. Production was often halted by machines in need of repair.

In 1899 that problem was addressed by the formation of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, which standardized operations and repair procedures. According to one account written by the International Shoe Company, United Shoe "undertook to organize complete systems of machines for Bottoming, Heeling and Finishing shoes and brought to each machine a uniform type of service, which has now developed to a point unparalleled in any other industry. Thus the year 1900 marked the beginning of modern shoemaking."<sup>34</sup> United Shoe enjoyed a long period of dominance in the field; one article estimated that the company still controlled at least 70% of the shoe machinery industry as of 1943.<sup>35</sup>

A comparison of general historical accounts of the shoe production process with descriptions of the Columbia plant's workings show that the Columbia plant operated in a typical fashion.<sup>36</sup> Although technically there were well over 100 separate steps involved in producing and selling a

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<sup>33</sup> International Shoe Co., pp. 20-22.

<sup>34</sup> International Shoe Co. pp. 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> Horace B. Davis, "Business Mortality: The Shoe Manufacturing Industry," in Harvard Business Review, Vol. XVII, 1939, p 337.

<sup>36</sup> The process at the Columbia plant was described at least twice in the Missourian, in "Daily Shoe Output Here is 2,000 Pairs," (2-2-1917) and "Life in Local Shoe Factory is 'Just One Shoe After Another' ." (3-13-1922) The locations for various departments were also indicated on the 1914 Sanborn Map of the factory.

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single pair of shoes, the production process which took place in the average shoe factory can be broken down into seven major steps. Two different descriptions of the general process, written in the mid-1900s, identify the same general production steps, and Columbia newspaper accounts from the period of significance show that all were utilized in the Columbia plant.<sup>37</sup> They are as follows:

**Cutting.** Production began with cutting the appropriate material, primarily leather, into the pieces needed. This was done on the fourth floor of the Columbia factory; production began there and concluded at the first floor shipping center. (The basement was used as a stock room.) The material for the uppers and linings were cut at the same time, then the pieces were matched and sorted and sent to the fitting room.

**Fitting.** In the fitting room, the pieces went through a skiving machine, which beveled the edges to be folded. Also, a thin layer of leather was sometimes split away to ensure a uniform thickness. The parts were then sewn together and fitted with buckles, eyelets and various trimmings. This required fifteen to sixty different steps. The third floor of the Columbia factory housed the fitting process.

**Sole Leather.** While the uppers were being prepared, the insoles, outsoles and related pieces, such as heels and box toes, were prepared in the sole leather room. Box toes reinforce the toe and preserve the shape of the shoe; they were sewn to the uppers on the fourth floor of the Columbia factory. Both the uppers and outsoles were attached to the insoles, with either stitching, staples, cement, or nails. In Columbia, nails were often used to hold things in place temporarily, and were replaced with tiny staples later on; heels were always nailed.

**Lasting.** The pieces from the cutting and sole leather rooms came together in the lasting room. It was in the lasting room that the shoes were formed to their final shape. In that area the partially assembled uppers were pulled over lasts, and attached to the insoles. (Lasts are wooden forms which look much like modern shoe trees; they determine the shape of the finished shoes.)

**Bottoming.** In the bottoming section, surplus materials were trimmed off, and the outsoles and heels were attached. In Columbia, bottoming and lasting were done on the second floor. The heels used there were half leather and half rubber; almost all other components were leather.

**Finishing.** The finishing process consisted of cleaning, polishing, and adding such final touches as shoe laces. A description of the Columbia plant which was written in 1922 included a detailed account of the process there:

Ink is placed on the heels, soles and bottoms of the shoes, and they are burnished or polished. This process is repeated three times. The name is branded on the bottom of the shoe, the last is removed and the shoe is ready to be washed and ironed. From

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<sup>37</sup> The production process is described in Shoes Through the Ages, and J. S. Harding, The Boot and Shoe Industry, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1934.)



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A description of the workings of the Columbia plant which was written in 1916 emphasized the role of mechanization in the process: "The 140 processes undergone by the shoe requires almost as many machines. Nearly everything is done at one accurate stroke. The employees seem to work with the regularity and accuracy of machines—the machines with the flexibility of human beings." The same reporter apparently had a weakness for puns: "And so the high-top boot in Columbia passes from cow to "calf."<sup>40</sup>

The Hamilton-Brown Shoe factory had the unhappy distinction of being the only large employer in the city to go under during the Great Depression. Local historian Alan Havig wrote that the factory, which he called "Columbia's only monument to assembly-line mass production at the time...closed during the Great Depression—temporarily in 1931, permanently in 1939. But for the factory's closing, Columbia withstood the Depression without permanent damage to large employers."<sup>41</sup>

The factory building continued to be used for manufacturing purposes into the early 1960s. It was used for the production of laminated wooden airplane propellers during World War II, and served for many years as the home of the Ar-Cel Garment Factory. Today, it is the home of the Atkins Investment Company, and houses a combination of office and warehouse space.

The factory building is the largest historic industrial building in the community today, and it continues to reflect its early industrial function. It was the largest manufacturing industry in the community for most, if not all, of its tenure as a shoe factory, and it gains further significance as the first Hamilton-Brown shoe factory to be built outside of St. Louis. It is the only historic industrial building of its kind in Columbia today, and it appears to have been the only one of its kind in the city throughout the period of significance.<sup>42</sup> The factory today looks very much as it did in 1911, when the Columbia Missourian declared that "the largest manufacturing industry in Columbia is that of the Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company."<sup>43</sup> △

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<sup>40</sup> "Daily Shoe Output Here is 2,000 Pairs", p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Havig, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> Columbia newspaper and promotional publications from 1910 to 1930 repeatedly refer to this facility as the largest manufacturing plant in town.

<sup>43</sup> "A City of Varied Products—Columbia," Columbia Missourian, January 29, 1911, p. 4.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

A lot located at the northwest corner of Wilkes Boulevard and Fay Street, in Columbia, Boone County, Missouri, described as following. Begin at the northeast curblineline of the intersection of Fay and Wilkes; proceed north 400 feet; thence west 105 feet; thence south 400 feet; thence east 105 feet, to the place of beginning. The property is parcel number 17-113-00-07-004.00 01 in subdivision plat book 0001 page 0048 of the Boone County Assessor's Office, Columbia, MO. See Figure One for a copy of the aerial-photo map of the property which is on file with the Boone County Assessor's office.

**Boundary Justification**

The current boundaries encompass all of the land currently associated with the factory.

**Photographs**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory  
1115 Wilkes Blvd., Columbia  
Boone County, MO  
Debbie Sheals  
March, 2002

Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory, MO Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City.

**List of Photographs**

See photo Key for description of camera angle.

1. Southeast corner
2. East elevation
3. Northeast corner
4. Northwest corner
5. Southwest corner
6. Detail, rear stair tower
7. Third floor, north side, (mandolin shop)
8. Third floor interior
9. Warehouse, first floor.
10. West windows, third floor.
11. Window detail, east wall.

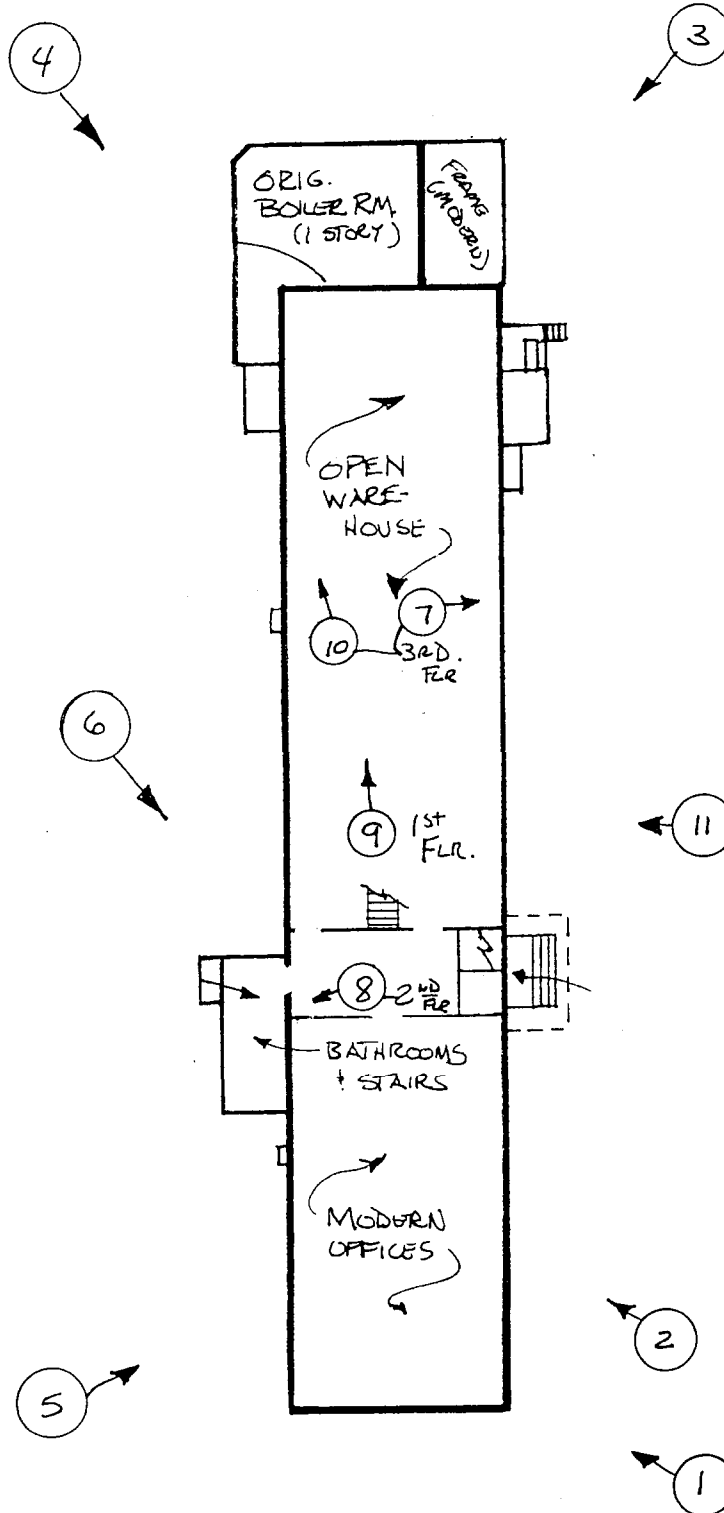
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Photo Key.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STA1  
DEPARTMENT  
WALLACE B.

1556 1/4 SW  
STURGEON SW



HAMILTON-  
BROWN  
SHOE FACTORY  
1115 WILKES  
COLUMBIA,  
BOONE  
COUNTY,  
MO  
15/558620/  
4312420

92°22'30"  
39°00"

1550000 E 556 557 R 13 W 20' 558

MOBERLY 31 MI.  
8 MI. TO MO. 124

4310000 N

13 MI. TO MO. 124

15 MI. TO U.S. 62  
BOONEVILLE INTERCHANGE 18 MI.

4318

57°30"

4312

4311

7561 1/4 NW  
(MUNTS DALE)















