

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 Lawler Motor Company Building

other name/site number Farmer Automobile Company Building

2. Location

street & town 1224 Frederick Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town St. Joseph N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Buchanan code 021 zip code 64501

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.)

Mark A. Miles Nov 18, 2008
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/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

- 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:) _____

Lawler Motor Company Building
Name of Property

Buchanan County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store - auto showroom and repair facility

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Two-part commercial block

foundation Concrete

 Stone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

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.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

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)

ARCHITECTURE _____

COMMERCE _____

Period of Significance

1913 - 1941 _____

Significant Dates

1913 _____

1941 _____

Significant Persons

(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:

Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City (MO) Public Library;
St. Joseph (MO) Public Library

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Lawler Motor Company Building
Name of Property

Buchanan County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/4/2/0/3/7 4/4/0/3/8/9/7
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

A tract of land located in the Southeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 8, Township 57, Range 35, described as follows: Beginning at a point 199.32 feet West of Quarter Section corner between Section 8 and 9 in said Township and Range, said point being at the intersection of the West line of 13th Street and the East and West center line through said Section 8; thence North along the West line of 13th Street 262.10 feet to the South line of Frederick Avenue; thence South 57 degrees 10 minutes West along the south line of Frederick Avenue 71.86 feet; thence South on a line parallel with the West line of 13th Street 219.52 feet to the East and West center line through said Section 8; thence East along the Quarter Section line 60.38 feet to the point of beginning. All in Buchanan County, Missouri and subject to all public and private roads and easements.

Property Tax No. N/A

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary encompasses the parcel of land historically associated with the building.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin (Principal) and Rachel Nugent (Associate)
organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date September 2008
street & number 215 W. 18th Street, #150 telephone 816-472-4950
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

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

name/title River Bluff Projects, LLC
street & number 1214 Frederick Avenue telephone 816-232-7248
city or town St. Joseph state MO zip code 64501

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 REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

SUMMARY

The Lawler Motor Company Building at 1224 Frederick Avenue, St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri occupies the southwest corner of 13th Street and Frederick Avenue, less than one mile northeast of St. Joseph's central business district. The small-scale mixed-use building with simple architectural styling was designed as an automobile showroom and service center, with a second-story apartment. The Lawler Motor Company Building has all of the requisite design elements necessary for a successful business of this type: large plate glass windows, an open floorplan, and multiple vehicular entrances. The building has a unique trapezoidal shape. The primary massing parallels the north-south orientation of 13th Street, but the front façade aligns with Frederick Avenue, which runs at an angle to the city's orthogonal street grid. The brick walls rest on a concrete and limestone foundation. The site slopes down away from Frederick Avenue so that the basement level is at grade on the south elevation. The overall vertical form of the building is L-shaped; only the front third of the building has a second story. The rear two-thirds of the building is only one story, although the basement level is increasing visible towards the rear of the building due to the change in grade. The first story is divided into the former showroom in the front third and the service area in the rear two-thirds. The corner of the building, at the intersection, is canted and contains the main pedestrian entrance. There are two walls of large plate glass windows in the former showroom area. There is one vehicular entrance to the first story from Frederick Avenue at the northwest corner of the building and one vehicular entrance to the basement at the southeast corner of the building. The second story was designed as an apartment with typical residential divisions of space and architectural details. The second-story asphalt roof is flat and the roof over the rear service area deteriorated due to the inadequate design of the original wood truss system. Although the interior finishes of the former showroom have been altered, the design of the space has remained the same. The building retains architectural integrity and clearly communicates its historic associations with the early automobile industry.

ELABORATION

SETTING

The Lawler Motor Company Building at 1224 Frederick Avenue occupies the southwest corner lot of Frederick Avenue and 13th Street. Frederick Avenue is a commercial thoroughfare connecting the downtown central business district of St. Joseph to the northeast corner of the city. Two blocks southwest of the Lawler Motor Company Building is the St. Joseph City Hall. Commercial entities, particularly those related to the transportation industry have lined this wide diagonal street for much of its history. From carriage and wagon shops in the 1880's to automobile dealerships, parts and supply stores, and filling stations throughout the twentieth century, the businesses along Frederick Avenue have long catered

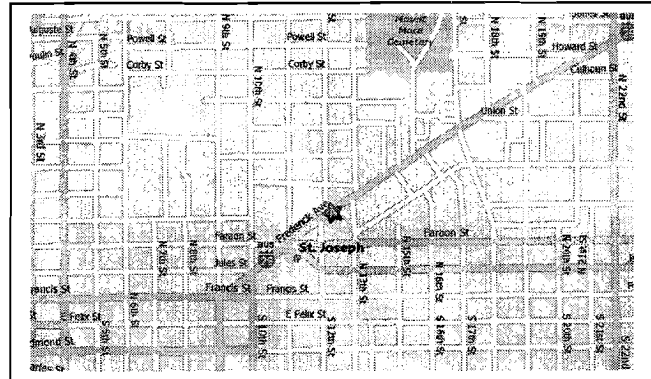
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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

to the vehicular needs of St. Joseph's residents. The buildings on the other corners of the intersection of Frederick Avenue and 13th Street were designed as garages and filling stations. Other than filling stations, many of the showrooms and manufacturing concerns moved to larger facilities or areas where more dealerships are concentrated. Frederick Avenue remains predominantly commercial, although there is now more variety to the businesses that line the street. The buildings along Frederick Avenue are mostly one- and two-story small-scale brick commercial structures. Development along the street is not dense, with driveways and surface parking lots interrupting the streetscape. One block away on either side of Frederick Avenue the neighborhood is predominantly residential.



The Lawler Motor Company Building occupies the northeast corner lot of the block bordered by Frederick Avenue to the north, 13th Street to the east, Faron Street to the south, and 12th Street to the west. The building directly abuts the concrete sidewalk along Frederick Avenue and 13th Street. The remainder of the long, narrow lot is an expanse of gravel and grass to the south of the building. The lot immediately to the west is vacant. Immediately to the west of the vacant lot are several brick two-story Victorian rowhouses that extend to the northwest corner of the block. There are two recently-constructed commercial buildings on the lots at the southern corners of the block along Faron Street. Surface parking lots cover the remaining open space on the block. Although the lot is relatively flat east to west, it slopes steeply to the south. The slope is steep enough that the basement of the Lawler Motor Company Building is at grade on the south elevation.

EXTERIOR

The Lawler Motor Company Building is a two-story small-scale brick commercial building. The footprint of the building is a trapezoid that fills the angled northeast corner of the lot. The east and west walls parallel each other and are perpendicular to the south wall. The north wall is angled to follow Frederick Avenue. The corner of the building at the intersection of Frederick Avenue and 13th Street is canted. The concrete and limestone foundation supports red brick walls with concrete trim. The second story sits atop only the triangular north section of the building, creating an L-shaped form. The remaining two-thirds of the building is one story.

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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

Fenestration and, to a lesser extent, decorative trim define the façades and communicate the functions of different spaces within the building. Large plate glass windows are the most significant exterior feature of the former showroom. The windows sit atop a low brick bulkhead. The original transom sashes remain above the windows. The second-story apartment has wood-frame double-hung sashes of a residential scale and design. To secure the vacant building, sheets of plywood currently cover the storefront and second story windows. However, the windows remain intact beneath the covering and are visible from the interior. The windows in the rear service area are large, industrial, multi-light metal frame windows with central pivot sashes. All of the first-story windows have concrete sills and lintels. The lintels are rectangular blocks set flush with the wall but with a raised area angled to look like a flat arch. The windows on the second story have concrete sills and brick lintels. The main pedestrian entrance has a plain concrete lintel, but the lintel above the second story entry door is similar to those above the first-story windows. The window openings at the basement level have neither sills nor lintels.

Strong horizontal trim divides the building's exterior corresponding to the division of spaces within. A concrete stringcourse separates the two stories on the northwest elevation, the canted northeast corner elevation, and half of the east elevation. The stringcourse has only a slight return on the west elevation. After the stringcourse stops, smaller concrete elements continue the horizontal line along the east and west façades, although they are only visible from the interior on the west elevation. These narrow blocks of concrete set at regular intervals along the façade correspond directly to interior brick buttresses and are part of the building's structural system. Ceiling joists are secured to the walls above the concrete blocks. Concrete coping caps the parapet wall of the one-story section of the building. A corbelled brick stringcourse runs the length of the second story, above the windows. Atop the parapet wall of the second story are two courses of brick coping that extend slightly beyond the plane of the wall. Four weep holes form a small diamond-shaped pattern that drains the second story roof behind the parapet wall. There is one set of weep holes on the canted northeast elevation. There are two sets of weep holes on the east elevation.

Fenestration loosely divides the front (northwest) façade into four bays. This elevation contains the main vehicular entrance and showroom storefront. The recessed vehicular entrance in the western-most bay is deep enough to receive the entire vehicle. The storefront is composed of a band of tall plate glass windows and a band of transom windows with a wood beam separating the two sections of glass. Two slender cast iron columns support the lintel above this enormous opening and divide the storefront into three bays. The storefront is covered from the exterior, but the glazing remains intact. On the second story, there are two small window openings above vehicular entrance on the first story. Three large, evenly-spaced window openings fill the remaining bays.

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Lawler Motor Company Building
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The canted elevation contains the main pedestrian entrance to the showroom on the first story and a single window on the second story. There is a large storefront window on the east elevation, corresponding to the showroom. The first store also contains a small window opening and an entrance to the second story. The second story of the east elevation contains three window openings.

The rear service area is the rectangular one-story section at the south end of the building. Fenestration divides the facades into irregular bays. Each bay contains one large multi-pane metal window with a center pivot sash. While all of the windows are the same height, there is no uniform width. The slope of the site exposes an increasing amount of the concrete foundation towards the southeast corner of the building. The bays of the first story, including the ones that are blank, contain a corresponding window in the basement level. The top of the southern-most window opening on the east elevation sits higher than the other basement windows. The concrete foundation line jogs up over this window opening. The brick follows suit, with four courses of brick laid vertically at the jog to emphasize the interruption.

Signs reading "FORD" in vertical lettering at the corner and "LAWLER MOTOR CO." underneath the window are painted in white onto the first story brick wall on the south elevation. The signs are located above the vehicular entrance to the basement. A simple concrete band separates the first story from the basement. The vehicular opening has a paneled wood garage door. A pedestrian door is located adjacent to the vehicular entrance. The brick at the basement level is of much lesser quality than the brick used for the upper stories. This was the utilitarian rear entrance to the building.

Stucco covers the original brick wall of the west elevation. A large chimney extends from this wall between two bays in the service area. There is a single window opening in the second story. A smaller chimney extends from this wall at the second story.

INTERIOR

On the interior, the first floor contains two main spaces: the former showroom at the front of the building and the large garage and service area at the rear. The showroom is a large open area with enormous plate glass windows lining the northwest and east walls. Slender cast iron structural columns are located intermittently around the room. There is one column adjacent to the north wall, one adjacent to the east wall, and one in the west wall. Only one column interrupts the center of the room. The location of the columns maximized the amount of open floor space, facilitating the movement and placement of vehicles in the showroom. The columns support exposed wood beams and joists. Steel members reinforce some of the wood cross-beams. The ceiling was originally plaster and lath, but both were removed. A drop ceiling, added during a renovation, was also removed. Deteriorated vinyl composition tile (VCT) covers some of

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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

the concrete floor. The original walls are plaster and lath. Contemporary wood veneer paneling covers the plaster to the height of the drop ceiling.

The horizontal wood member between the plate glass and the transoms on the northwest wall contains an early conduit and fixtures for electric lights. The canted wall at the northeast corner of the room retains its original wood frame, although the door itself has been altered. The pair of double-hung sash windows at the south end of the east wall retains its original wood frame.

The south wall contains an entrance to the stairwell that leads to the second story. The area under the steps was built out to incorporate a narrow bathroom. There is a large opening in the wall connecting the showroom to the rear service area. The support member visible in the south wall is an unfinished wood post. The west wall between the showroom and the vehicular entrance is lath and plaster. The original paneled door and transom are retained, along with a triple window that has been boarded up. Two steel columns were added to either side of the original cast iron column to support the additional steel used to reinforce the ceiling beam.

Immediately west of the showroom is the recessed vehicular entrance from Frederick Avenue. The polygonal space contains a finished opening in the north wall. The original multi-light, paneled wood doors that hung between the bay and the service area are extant, although they were removed from their hinges. The walls and ceiling are plaster, either on lath or on brick. Concrete blocks fill the one exterior window in the space on the west wall.

The service area is a large rectangular space with a completely open floor plan. Offices and workrooms that once lined the east wall no longer exist, although it is possible they were not original. The original wood truss roof collapsed. According to the owner, the trusses were under-designed for the width of the space. There are brick buttresses at regular intervals along the east and west walls. The narrow concrete blocks visible from the exterior sit atop the buttresses. The joist pockets above the concrete blocks are now voids, as no elements of the roof structure remain. Iron braces support the walls at regular intervals. There are remnants of the VCT that once covered the floor. All but one of the large, multi-light metal window frames remain in place, although none of the windows retain their glazing. Modern sheathing covers the north wall. Wood sheathing and tar paper cover the second-story of the north wall, revealing the shape of the missing roof. A layer of tin sheathing pressed in the shape of bricks is visible beneath portions of the tar paper on the second story.

The basement was originally accessible from a narrow flight of stairs along the north wall of the service area or through the vehicular and pedestrian entrances in the building's south wall. The stairs are not

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extant. The substantial concrete structural system is visible throughout the basement. There are two rows of two concrete piers centered below the service area. Portions of the north and west foundation walls appear to be constructed of limestone and are possibly remnants of a previous building. Limestone walls divide the north end of the basement into three small rooms and a hallway. The concrete foundation for the angled north wall of the current building visibly intersects the perpendicular walls of the limestone foundation. A low arched opening in the north wall towards the northeast corner of the basement opens into a sunken vaulted space constructed of cobblestone. The space was allegedly used for the storage of ice when an earlier building on the site operated as a brewery.

The footprint of the second story apartment covers the showroom and vehicular bay on the first story. Entry stairs are located along the wall between the showroom and the service area. At the top of the stairs is a large triangular room. One can access every room in the apartment from this space or its radiating hallways. Up a short flight of steps, a small door in the south wall accessed the roof over the service area. Immediately to the west of the roof access is a small bathroom. The kitchen occupies the west corner of the apartment. The living room is in the northeast corner of the apartment. There are three rooms along the north wall that connect the living room and kitchen: a small pantry, the dining room and an office. There are two bedrooms, each with a small closet, along the east wall. The apartment retains much of its original architectural detail, such as stained wood trim and door frames, double-hung wood windows, and plaster walls. A large opening between the office and the northeast corner room contains two paneled half-walls, each topped with a short wood column.

INTEGRITY

The Lawler Motor Company Building has experienced a variety of alterations over its nearly one hundred-year history. The installation of a drop ceiling and wood paneling in the showroom was a significant alteration. This alteration, however, is entirely cosmetic. Although the plaster ceiling is missing, the original plate glass windows and transoms, as well as the plaster walls remain intact beneath these surface treatments. The showroom also retains its original open floorplan. The vehicular entrance integral to the success of the business as an automobile service center retains its essential qualities, although the original service bay doors need to be reattached. The roof over the service area was improperly designed and failed several years ago. No elements of the roof structure survive, although the voids in the wall where structural members tied in remain visible and the outline of the roof remains legible on the south wall of the second story. The entire second-story remains intact with its original configuration and architectural finishes. The building retains its two-part commercial block form and the distinct features that communicate its construction to serve the early automobile industry.

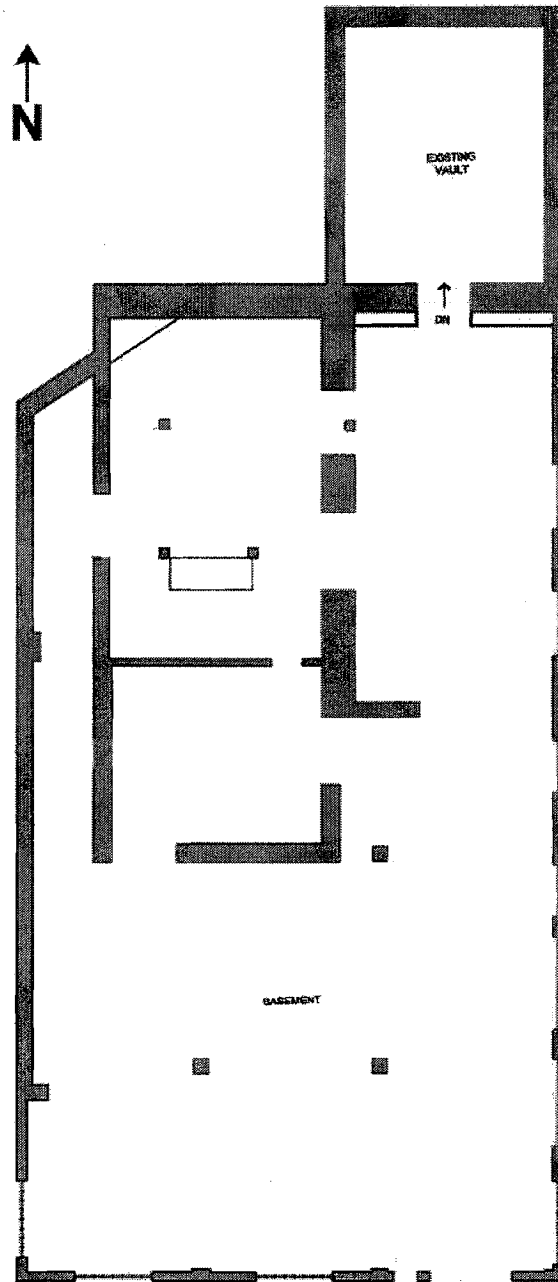
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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

BASEMENT PLAN, 2008



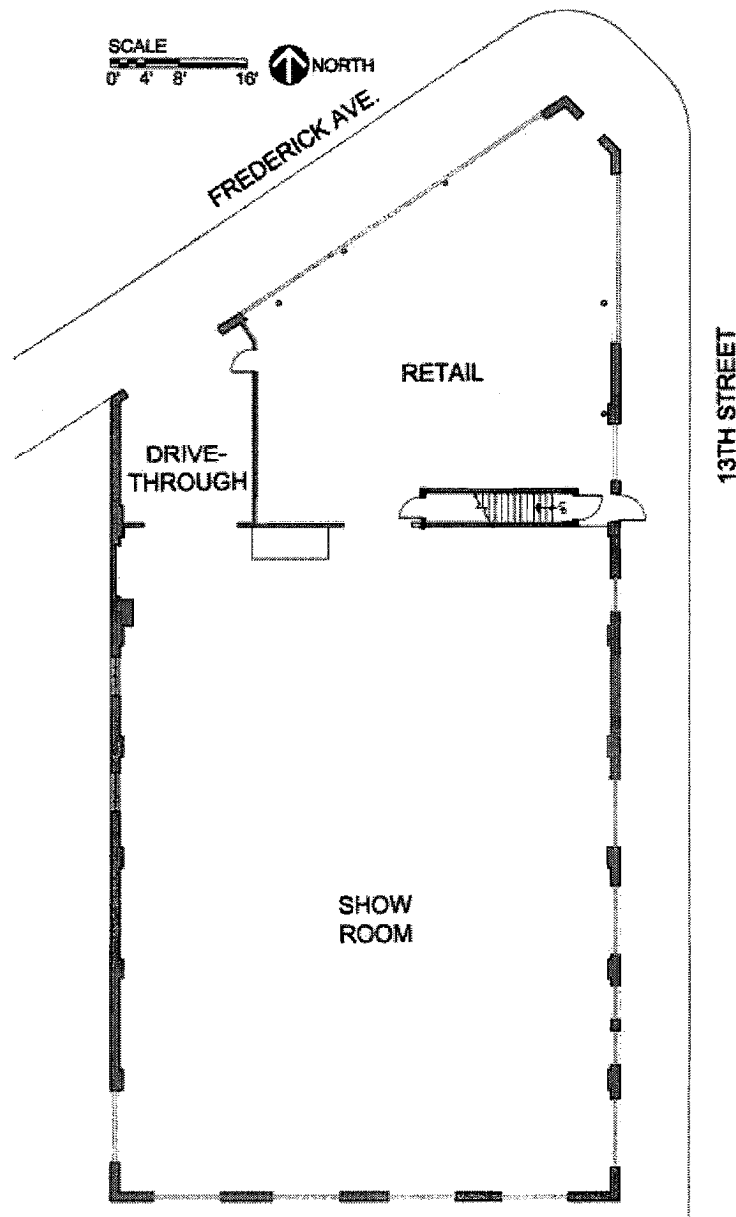
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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

FIRST FLOOR PLAN, 2008



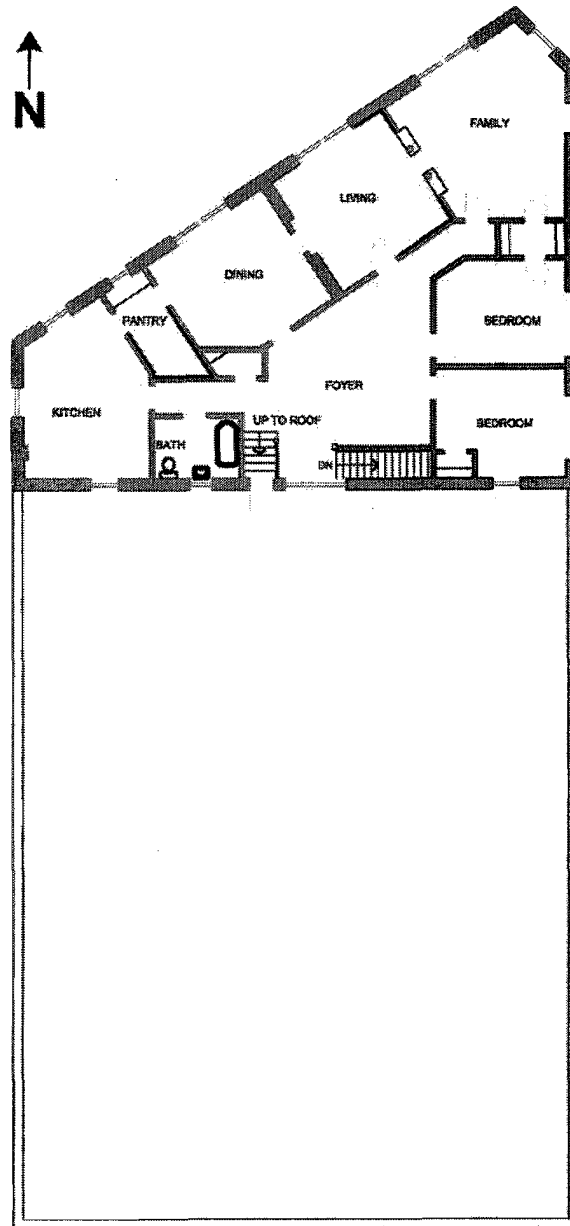
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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

SECOND FLOOR PLAN, 2008



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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

SUMMARY

The Lawler Motor Company Building located at 1224 Frederick Avenue in St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE for its expression of the Small Scale Commercial Blocks and Service-related Facilities property types described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri*. It is a simple yet enduring example of an early-twentieth century commercial structure designed specifically for the purpose of selling and repairing automobiles. The Lawler Motor Company Building stakes its claim in the development of the neighborhood as it evolved from a scattering of diverse commercial entities, including those related to the sales and service of carriages and buggies, to a concentrated area of businesses and services related to the automobile. Although it was not included in the *Historic Resources of Frederick Avenue, St. Joseph Multiple Resource Area*, the Lawler Motor Company Building is one of many buildings along Frederick Avenue that reflects the “Golden Age” of St. Joseph that occurred between the Civil War and the Great Depression, when many important developments were made in transportation and commerce.

After a brief one-year period housing the Farmer Automotive Company, the Lawler Motor Company occupied the building and operated as the city’s exclusive Ford dealership from 1917 to 1928. As the popularity and availability of automobiles greatly increased, so did the need for spaces to display and service these large machines. The building that stood on the lot prior to 1913, the former Avenue Carriage Works, was at least partially razed for the construction of a building better-equipped to accommodate its new merchandise.¹ Design improvements included large windows at street level to increase visibility of the product for passersby; multiple vehicular entrances; and open floor plans with minimal interference from support columns that improved maneuverability within the building. Such elements were typical of this new building type: the automobile dealership, sales and service center. Although it was a natural transition from carriages and wagons to automobiles, the building’s location gained even greater significance as commercial entities, specifically auto-related concerns, steadily replaced residential structures along the block. While maintaining the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhood, the Lawler Motor Company Building clearly embodies this type and period of commercial design and is an excellent example of the automotive service buildings that survive from the early days of St. Joseph’s automobile sales industry. The period of significance, 1913 – 1941, reflects the date of construction and the date when the building ceased to be in continuous use in connection with the automotive industry.

¹ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. St. Joseph: Combe Printing Co., 1912

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Lawler Motor Company Building
Buchanan County, Missouri

ELABORATION

ARCHITECTURE FOR AUTOMOBILES

When automobiles first appeared early in the twentieth century, they were novelties owned only by the wealthy. Building automobiles was a labor-intensive process that kept automobile costs high – between \$2,000 and \$3,000 – roughly twice the annual income of an average United States worker.² Buying a car, making repairs, servicing vehicles, and even finding fuel were cumbersome, complicated tasks.

Automobile-related businesses initially functioned as adjunct operations to existing businesses. Livery stables and carriage shops leased and sold cars. Feed stores and groceries sold gasoline. Blacksmiths made repairs. Because they were viewed as a recreational vehicle for the wealthy, automobiles did not initially instigate the construction of new buildings. They were sold and serviced alongside earlier modes of transportation. However, the increasing popularity of the automobile outpaced the existing retail infrastructure. By the early 1900s, automobile merchants outgrew their converted nineteenth century buildings, dropped their other product lines, and constructed the first generation of buildings intended for the specific purpose of marketing and servicing automobiles. The rocketing demand for vehicles and services soon exceeded the capacity of these existing businesses to provide the support the industry required. As occurred at 1224 Frederick Avenue, the marketing of this new technology involved constructing a new, modern building with all of the design elements both desired and required to operate a dealership. Initially existing buildings were renovated and converted, but the trend quickly moved towards constructing entirely new buildings designed specifically for displaying and servicing automobiles.

Before World War I, carmakers developed a variety of technological, marketing, and business strategies that reduced costs and increased profits. Early innovations included the first step-in closed-car design, Cadillac's 1905 Osceola, as well as Charles F. Kettering's 1911 invention of the electric self-starter.³ The most significant advance in the industry was Henry Ford's introduction of the assembly line at the Highland Park, Michigan Model T manufacturing plant in 1913. The drastically lower cost of production allowed volume to rise and retail prices to drop. In addition to lowering prices by increasing production efficiency, Ford increased the daily wage he paid his employees to \$5 in 1914, which was twice the daily

² Susan Richards Johnson and Nicole M. Sabatini, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for The Kirkwood Building, 1737-41 McGee Street, Kansas City, Missouri, (Kansas City, Missouri: Susan Richards Johnson & Associates, Inc., 2001), 8-18.

³ General Motors Corporation, "GM Corporate History – 1910," *General Motors Corporation*, cited in Elizabeth Rosin and Kerry Davis, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Greenlease Cadillac Building, 2900 Gillham Road, Kansas City, Missouri, (Kansas City, Missouri: Historic Preservation Services, LLC, 2002), 8-13.

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amount the average auto worker received.⁴ That same year, Ford also introduced the concept of the rebate, a marketing practice that remains popular today. Other automobile manufacturers followed suit and once the automobile became affordable for the average American, its popularity skyrocketed. The automobile was no longer a toy for the wealthy but was within the grasp of the ordinary American. From 1914 to 1917, annual automobile production in the United States jumped from 573,000 to 1.9 million.⁵ Buildings, such as the Lawler Motor Company Building, appeared in cities nationwide.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the increasing popularity and availability of the automobile in St. Joseph was only slightly behind national trends. Listings under "Automobiles" in the business sections of St. Joseph's city directories grew considerably between 1907 and 1915. In 1907, two companies sold automobiles, but only one of those companies, Wyco Auto Co., offered accessories and supplies, garage, livery, parts, repairs, storage, and tires. That same year there were 14 wagon and carriage manufacturers and dealers.⁶ By 1912 there were 11 automobile manufacturers and dealers, including Avenue Carriage Works at 1224-1226 Frederick Avenue. The number of wagon and carriage manufacturers dropped to ten.⁷ Just three years later in 1915, there were 26 automobile manufacturers and dealers, 11 of which were located along Frederick Avenue.⁸

While the auto showroom was an entirely new type of building, owners and architects tended to maintain the character and scale of the surrounding commercial neighborhood, using existing styles and materials as guidelines.⁹ This first generation of purpose-built auto dealerships and service centers continued to mimic the designs of traditional Main Street commercial and mixed-use blocks. This adaptation of the traditional commercial building form lent an air of respectability to the still nascent automobile industry.¹⁰ The Lawler Motor Company Building is an example of a small-scale commercial block as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri – Amendment*. The two-story mixed-use building contains a well-defined storefront and strong horizontal trim that distinctly separates the upper and lower stories. The footprint of this type of building abuts the sidewalk and follows the angle of the street, creating a dense street wall with the adjacent buildings. Although the Lawler building does not share a common wall with another building, the narrow and deep brick form aligns with the street on two sides. The Lawler Motor Company Building, with simple,

⁴ Genat, Robert. *The American Car Dealership*. Osceola, Wisconsin: MBI Publishing Company. 1999, 8.

⁵ Genat, 9.

⁶ Combe-Polk Directory Co.'s St. Joseph City Directory, 1907.

⁷ Polk's St. Joseph City Directory 1912.

⁸ Polk's St. Joseph City Directory 1915.

⁹ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 75-76.

¹⁰ Liebs, 40-41.

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vernacular trim is also an example of a Service-related Facility described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. The building was designed so that the use of the property would be obvious from the exterior through the inclusion of front and rear vehicular entrances. The building was constructed on a lot along a major vehicular transportation route through the city of St. Joseph, an important feature for service-related facilities.¹¹

While they retained the guise of traditional Main Street commercial blocks, the new automotive business buildings differed from their cousins in ways that addressed the specific requirements of the products they sold and the needs of their customers. Like other commercial buildings, they had to accommodate both more-polished, public areas for sales and utilitarian areas for service. A large showroom occupied the street-facing first story of the Lawler Motor Company Building. Its plaster walls and ceiling stood in contrast to the concrete floor and brick walls of the rear service area.

The most significant difference between automotive buildings and non-automotive commercial buildings of this vintage is a structural system that allowed auto parts and vehicles to be stored, assembled, and moved into and within the building. The structural system had to accommodate heavy, dead weight as well as live loads, while utilizing column spacing that did not obstruct internal circulation.¹² The polygonal showroom in the Lawler Motor Company Building contains only one cast iron column within the open floor space. Additional columns on the northwest and east walls extend only slightly into showroom floor. The long walls of the first floor service area contain brick buttresses that supported the large beams necessary to span the enormous room. There is no evidence of a center support system. The basement's thick concrete walls and piers were also designed to support heavy loads from the service area and showroom above.

The possibility of fire and the ventilation of gas fumes were real concerns for automotive businesses, and providing ample ventilation was necessary for a successful design. Automotive buildings also incorporated a variety of fire proof materials in their construction, such as concrete, hollow clay tile, brick, terra cotta, and stone. In early automotive buildings, modern fire proof materials were often used in tandem with traditional wood framing systems. Abundant windows brought light into the interior and featured operable sashes to expel fumes. Illustrating these trends, the design for the Lawler Motor Company Building features concrete floors and cast iron columns, along with wood ceiling joists and

¹¹ Hopkins, John Linn and Marsha R. Oates, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri (Memphis, Tennessee: Hopkins & Associates, 1999), F 25-29.

¹² "American Architecture, 1891-1941: Commercial," *Architectural Record*, Vol. 89 (January 1941), 130-2.

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floor decks for the second floor. Large multi-pane windows with center pivot sashes encircle the rear service area, providing ample natural light and ventilation.

Likewise, the Lawler Motor Company Building features oversized display windows to showcase the oversized products sold inside. Plate glass storefront windows resting on very low bulkhead walls form the street-facing walls. The glazing is virtually uninterrupted by structural elements.

As motor vehicles became more common, traffic congestion became a concern to the public and to business owners. Designs that allowed cars to enter the building were expensive to build but removed congestion from the street.¹³ One feature that distinguishes the Lawler Motor Company Building from other non-automotive commercial buildings of this period is multiple vehicular entrances – one off of Frederick Avenue leading directly into the service area on the first floor and one at the rear of the building close to 13th Street leading into the basement. The grading of the site eliminated the need for a costly and space-consuming automobile elevator.

THE AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP

The most significant advance in the business of automotive sales was the development of the independent dealership. Early on, automakers realized they could not build production facilities in every community and devised a way to distribute their product in the most efficient manner. The first automakers tried various tactics, unsuccessfully, to sell their products, including mail order and consignment. Banks were also wary of lending money to participants in an industry that had hardly proven itself to be sustainable, therefore manufacturers, even established ones, continuously encountered difficulties in raising the capital required to maintain operations.¹⁴

Dealers were fundamental to the success of automakers during this time. The dealership was the first point of contact with the potential car-buying public. Automobile manufacturers, while focusing on technological innovations and improvements, developed vast retail networks by offering franchise opportunities to local businessmen nationwide. In exchange for selling rights within a defined territory, the franchise contract required the dealer to provide an adequate sales and service facility, proper signage, a stock of spare parts, and repair service for cars sold. Auto company representatives often visited the potential dealer on site to determine suitability. In addition, the dealer had to have at least one new model on display at all times. The defined sales territory prevented competition among dealers representing the

¹³ Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, The Supermarket and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁴ Genat, 17.

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same make of car and maintained the effectiveness of the franchise dealer system.¹⁵ Dealers who sold in another dealer's territory received fines from the manufacturer and risked losing their franchise. A successful dealer might receive an expanded territory, thus ensuring a wider consumer base, increased profits, and further expansion opportunities.

The dealership system required dealers to send a ten percent deposit for the cars they would sell in their showrooms which would then be recouped in the large deposits buyers would submit in order to purchase the vehicles. Since demand for new automobiles through 1920 was continually greater than supply, the constant flow of capital allowed the industry to flourish.¹⁶ This is evident in the sharp increase in automobile manufacturers and dealers within the city of St. Joseph in just under a decade, from two companies in 1907 to 26 in 1915.¹⁷

The success of the dealership system justified the simplicity in obtaining a franchise and the stringent rules required to maintain one. In addition to agreeing to sell cars in the territory appointed by the manufacturer, the dealer also agreed to offer repairs on any car sold and stock the spare parts required for such repairs. This condition necessitated a designated space within the building for conducting repairs. The contracts for new Ford franchises required the dealer to offer repair services to any Ford owner, regardless of where the vehicle was purchased. The franchise was also required to stock \$20,000 worth of spare parts.¹⁸ The large service area and basement of the Lawler Motor Company Building provided ample space to meet the stringent requirements of the Ford Motor Company.

PROPERTY HISTORY

As the city of St. Joseph grew in size and wealth, the commercial district expanded, spreading along major arterial routes such as Frederick Avenue. Frederick Avenue connects the central business district to the northeast corner of St. Joseph, running at an angle to the city's orthogonal street grid. Since Frederick Avenue was an old stagecoach road dating to the time when St. Joseph was a starting point for the Santa Fe Trail,¹⁹ it is logical that transportation-related businesses would be located along this important route. This angled street created design questions for property owners and builders throughout its history. There was never a consensus as to how buildings should be oriented. The dwellings and small commercial structures that lined the street in 1883 were situated perpendicular to Frederick Avenue, perpendicular to the city grid, and at every angle in between.

¹⁵ Genat, 19.

¹⁶ Genat, 17.

¹⁷ Combe-Polk Directory Co.'s St. Joseph City Directory, 1907; Polk's St. Joseph City Directory 1915.

¹⁸ Genat, 18.

¹⁹ *Missouri: The WPA Guide to the "Show Me" State*. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration of Missouri. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998, 283.

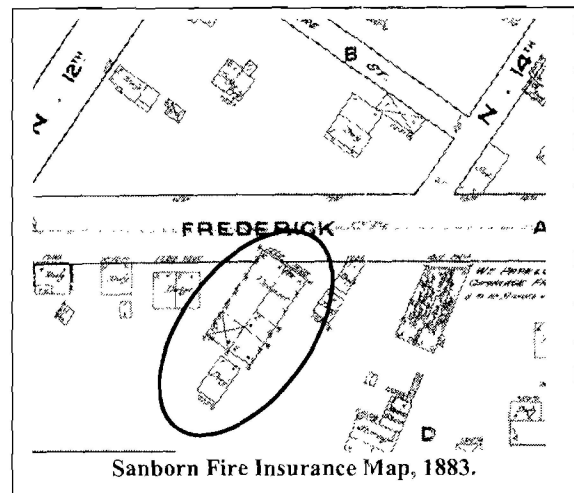
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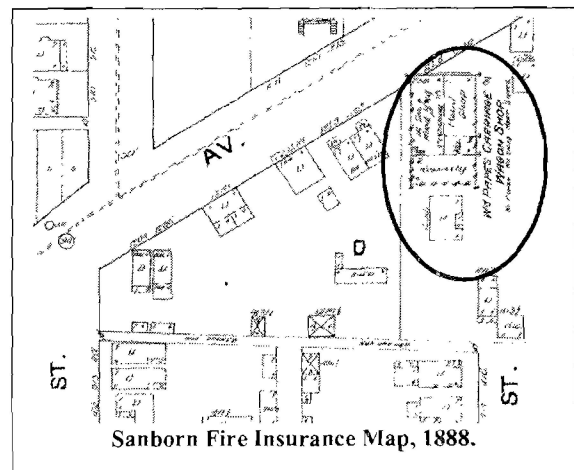
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The St. Joseph city directory for 1860-61 indicates that the Aniser & Co. brewery operated at the corner of Frederick Avenue and 13th Street.²⁰ In 1869-70, Wingerter and Reitinger Brewery occupied the same location.²¹ It is possible that the limestone foundation and vaulted spaces below the basement are remnants of this previous building.²² According to Sanborn Maps, this building aligned with the city's orthogonal street grid, despite its location on the diagonal of Frederick Avenue. Therefore the northwest corner of the original building and portions of the existing basement extend beyond the current front lot line and under the street.²³



In 1883, the blocks along Frederick Avenue between 12th Street to the west and Landis and Mt. Mora Road to the east contained a scattering of small residential structures. In the middle of the south block were two commercial structures – one is 1224 Frederick Avenue (on the Sanborn map as 1226-1228 Frederick Avenue) and the other is the slightly smaller William Pape & Co. carriage factory (1302-1304 Frederick Avenue). The building at 1224 Frederick Avenue is identified as “Vacant”²⁴



²⁰ *St. Joseph City Directory for 1860-61*. Compiled by H. Fotheringham. St. Joseph: J.A. Millan's Ben Franklin Book & Job Printing Establishment, 1860.

²¹ *Ballenger & Hoyer's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. St. Joseph: Ballenger & Hoyer, 1869-70

²² Hopkins, John L. *Historic Preservation Certification Application – Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance for the Farmer Automobile Company at 1224-1228 Frederick Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri*. Memphis, TN: Hopkins & Associates, 2003. 3.

²³ Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Joseph, Missouri*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, sheet 21.

²⁴ Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Joseph, Missouri*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, sheet 21. City directories for 1872, 1879, 1881-82, and 1884 were searched and no listings for either a brewery or carriage works were found at this address.

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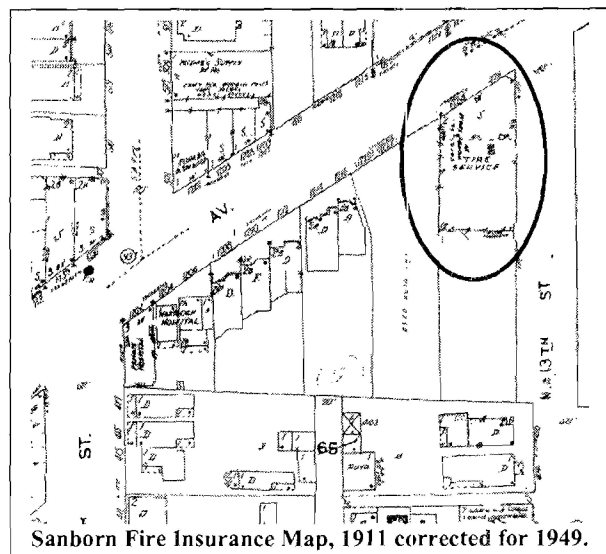
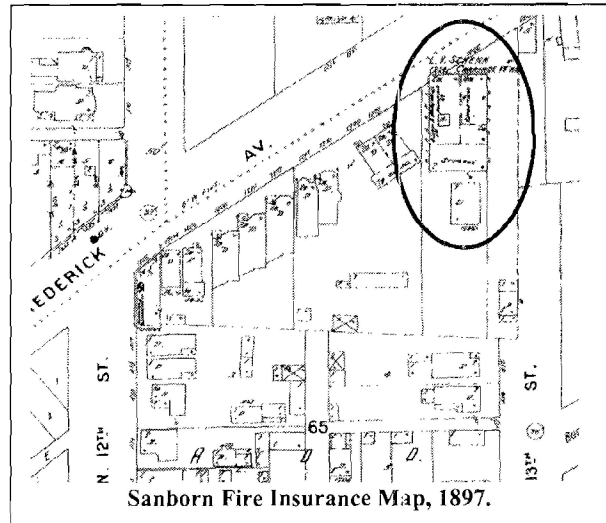
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Five years later, in 1888, William Pape's Carriage and Wagon shop occupied 1224 Frederick Avenue.²⁵ The 1892 and 1894 city directories do not list a carriage or wagon shop at that address.²⁶ In 1896, Louis V. Schenk, previously an employee of the St. Joseph Buggy Company, opened the L.V. Schenk Carriage Works at 1224 Frederick Avenue.²⁷ Schenk operated this business until 1906.²⁸

The following year, the businesses listed at 1224 Frederick Avenue were Avenue Carriage Works and Roth & Korn's Real Estate.²⁹ Avenue Carriage Works remained at that location thru 1912, after which owners Phil P. Weller and Ezra Gebhart moved the business to 1407-1409 Frederick Avenue.³⁰ Avenue Carriage Works is an excellent example of a business established around an earlier form of transportation that adapted with advent of new technology. The company embraced the horseless age by selling the new horseless carriages alongside older modes of transportation. The advertisement in the 1912 city directory described them as "Dealers in Automobiles, carriages, and delivery wagons."³¹ By 1911, two garages and a machine shop had opened on the north side of Frederick Avenue and there was an automotive garage on the southeast corner of 13th Street.³²



²⁵ Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Joseph, Missouri*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1888, sheet 11. The 1888 city directory is not available.

²⁶ Hoyer's city directory - St. Joseph, 1892, 1894. These are the only city directories available between 1888 and 1895.

²⁷ Hoyer's city directory - St. Joseph 1895, 1896.

²⁸ *Combe's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. St. Joseph: Combe Printing Co., 1906.

²⁹ *Combe city directory - St. Joseph, 1907*.

³⁰ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1912, 1913.

³¹ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1912, 10.

³² Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of St. Joseph, Missouri*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1911, sheet 50.

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In 1913 and 1915, the address is listed as “vacant,” presumably due to construction of the new building.³³ The first tenant of the current building at 1224 Frederick Avenue was the Farmer Auto Company in 1916, owned and operated by Samuel R. Farmer. In 1915, the Farmer Auto Company was located at 1302 Frederick Avenue, on the southeast corner of 13th Street, directly east of the nominated property. When the Farmer Auto Company moved into the new building in 1916, 1302 Frederick Avenue became the Farmer Auto Supply Company.³⁴ Also located on that block were Interstate Rubber Company at 1201 Frederick Avenue, Wyco Car Company Autos at 1217 Frederick Avenue, Stagg Auto Company at 1221-27 Frederick Avenue, and Wolfley Auto Company, also at 1302 Frederick Avenue.³⁵ In 1917, Ford Motor Company, managed by Michael P. Lawler, occupied the building and the Farmer Auto Company moved to 1102 Frederick Avenue.³⁶

Lawler Motor Company, St. Joseph’s only authorized Ford dealership thrived at 1224 Frederick Avenue for eleven years on a stretch of road lined with auto-related businesses: Lawler Motor Company’s used car department (1217 Frederick Avenue); Foster-Hall Tire Company (1221 Frederick Avenue); Motor Parts and Bearings Company (1225 Frederick Avenue); Barnsdall Ref. Company filling station (1301 Frederick Avenue); Ayers Auto Supply Company (1302 Frederick Avenue); Bachman Tire Service (1306 Frederick Avenue); Tethrow Brothers Auto Parts (1316-26 Frederick Avenue).³⁷ While various commercial structures lined much of Frederick Avenue, businesses in the 1200 and 1300 blocks were firmly aligned with the transportation industry. These blocks retained this character until the twentieth century.

By 1930, Lawler Motor Company joined forces with the Grant Motor Company, authorized Lincoln dealers, and moved to a larger building at 1002 Francis. The Lawler used car department still operated across the street at 1217 Frederick Avenue.³⁸ Between 1932 and 1941 a series of auto companies or auto-related companies occupied the Lawler Motor Company Building, with no one company staying for more than two years. These companies were: Gray Brothers Tire Company, Kagey Inc. Autos, Alban Motor Company, Cutberth-Jackson Motors Inc., Cutberth Motor Company, and finally Lewis Nash Motor Company.³⁹ In 1942 the building was vacant.⁴⁰ The California Citrus Juice Company, bottlers of

³³ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1913, 1915.

³⁴ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1915.

³⁵ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1916.

³⁶ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1917.

³⁷ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1928.

³⁸ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1930.

³⁹ *Polk’s St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1932, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1938-39, 1939, 1940, 1941.

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carbonated beverages, occupied 1224 Frederick Avenue 1946 and 1947.⁴¹ Tri-State Tire and Supply Inc. occupied the building for one year in 1949.⁴²

Midland Empire Sales and Service occupied the Lawler Motor Company Building from 1951 until 1983. This company sold radios, televisions, air conditioning units and major appliances from the front showroom and repaired these same items from the service area at the rear of the building.⁴³ Midland Empire renovated the building circa 1955 and circa 1980, subdividing the service area for offices and workrooms.⁴⁴ In 1990 Big Four Hardware retail store occupied the Lawler Motor Company Building.⁴⁵ By 1995, Family Video occupied the building.⁴⁶ From 2000 to the present, the building has been vacant.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Throughout its ninety-five-year history the Lawler Motor Company Building has had twelve different occupants, but there have been relatively few changes made to the building. Even though the building was designed for the specific purpose of displaying and servicing automobiles, the universal appeal of the open floorplan enabled the building to continue to be a usable space with only minor alterations and renovations throughout its history. The history of this property plainly illustrates the evolution of buildings related to the automobile industry. The previous building on the site was a carriage works that began selling and servicing automobiles. This building was partially razed and rebuilt with all of the design features so important in the new industry of selling and servicing automobiles. The Lawler Motor Company building is a structure that contributes to the historic resources of St. Joseph, Missouri. As a hybrid of the small-scale commercial block and the service-related facility described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri – Amendment*, the low, mixed-use, brick structure has a dominant storefront that aligns with the street and a vehicular entrance to broadcast its purpose as an automobile service center. The Lawler Motor Company Building maintains its original character-defining features as an early automobile dealership.

⁴⁰ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1942.

⁴¹ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1946, 1947.

⁴² *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1949.

⁴³ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1951, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1983.

⁴⁴ Hopkins. *Historic Preservation Certification Application – Part I*. 3. Section 5 physical description references a building permit as the source of the dates of alterations.

⁴⁵ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1990.

⁴⁶ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 1995.

⁴⁷ *Polk's St. Joseph (Buchanan County, Missouri) City Directory*. Kansas City: Gate City Directory Co., 2000.

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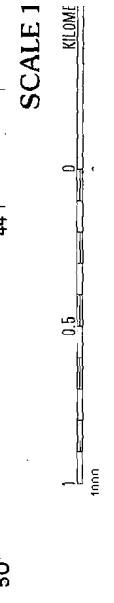
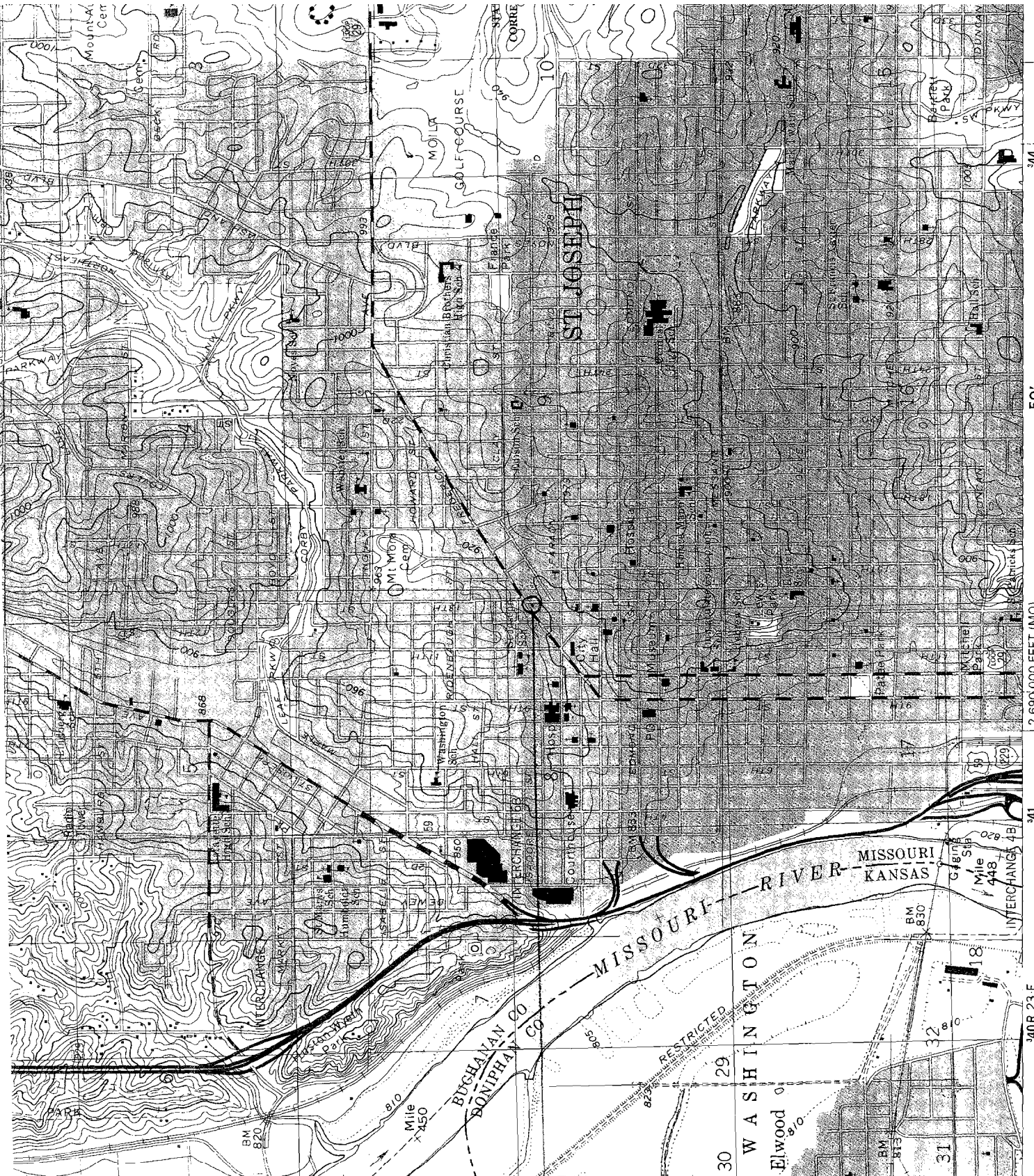
PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Photographer: Brad Finch
F-Stop Photography
Kansas City, Missouri

Date of Photographs: 14 May 2008

Digital images submitted with nomination on CD-ROM

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	Front (Northeast) and East Elevations	Southwest
2.	Front Elevation	South
3.	Front and West Elevations	Southeast
4.	South and West Elevations	Northeast
5.	South Elevation	North
6.	North Wall of Service Area	North
7.	Showroom Interior	Northeast
8.	Vehicular Entrance	North
9.	Second Story Hallway and Stairs	Southeast
10.	Second Story Dining Room and Living Room	Northeast
11.	Basement	Northwest
12.	Basement with Limestone Wall	Southwest
13.	Basement Limestone Wall and Concrete Structural System	North
14.	Sub-basement Vault	North



LAWLER MOTOR
COMPANY BUILDING
ST. JOSEPH,
BUCHANAN COUNTY
MISSOURI
15/342037/4403897

1 310 000 FEET
(MO)

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1969. Planimetry derived from imagery
taken 1997 and other sources. Public Land Survey System and



























