

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Michelson Building
Other names/site number n/a
Name of related Multiple Property Listing n/a

2. Location

Street & number 3125-3133 Troost Avenue n/a not for publication
City or town Kansas City n/a vicinity
State Missouri Code MO County Jackson Code 095 Zip code 64109

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

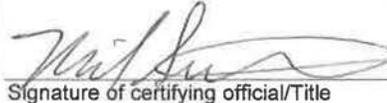
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

 Deputy SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

DEC 07 2017
Date JP 12/06/17

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

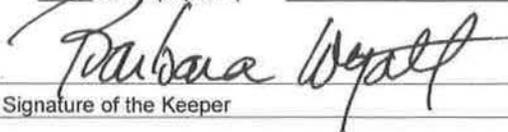
Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:) _____


Signature of the Keeper

1-29-18
Date of Action

Michelson Building
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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.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: Department Store

COMMERCE: Specialty Store

COMMERCE: Financial Institution

COMMERCE: Business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: TERRA COTTA

BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: _____

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Michelson Building
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Period of Significance

1923

Significant Dates

1923

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Koch, William J., architect

Morley, Patrick J., builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Kansas City Landmarks Commission

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.069457 -94.571225 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Brenda and Michelle Spencer
organization Spencer Preservation date 30 August 2017
street & number 10150 Onaga Road telephone 785-456-9857
city or town Wamego state KS zip code 66547
e-mail brenda@spencerpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: Michelson Building

City or Vicinity: Kansas City

County: Jackson State: Missouri

Photographer: Brenda Spencer (except where noted)

Date

Photographed: May 10 & 22 and June 26, 2017

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

#	Direction	Description
1 of 20	NE	East side of 3100 block of Troost, looking NE with Michelson Building in center of photo
2 of 20:	NE	Front/west facade of Michelson Building, from South
3 of 20:	SE	Front/west facade from North
4 of 20:	NE	Storefronts, looking NW on sidewalk in front of building
5 of 20:	E	Detail on terracotta pilasters between bays on front facade
6 of 20:	E	Terracotta detailing with shells extending above roofline at parapet on front facade
7 of 20:	E	Detail of north bay on front/west facade with entry to upper floors
8 of 20:	E	Detail of building entrance at north end of front/west facade
9 of 20:	W	Commercial bay on rear facade
10 of 20:	N	Looking north along interior of storefront, second from south end (3131) <i>Photo taken by Joy Coleman, Treanor HL</i>
11 of 20:	E	Terrazzo at recessed entry to storefront bay at 3125, first storefront bay S of entry bay on N end
12 of 20:	E	Looking E toward rear of commercial space at third bay from S end (3129) <i>Photo taken by Joy Coleman, Treanor HL</i>
13 of 20:	E	Looking E in entry bay at N end of front facade
14 of 20:	NE	Detail of main stair with marble newel post, wainscoting and floor tile; railing is missing
15 of 20:	W	Looking W toward primary building entry with stairway to basement and second floor
16 of 20:	W	Looking W along S wall in SE corner of 2 nd floor with secondary metal stair to 1 st floor
17 of 20:	S	Looking S down central corridor on 2 nd floor from top of stair
18 of 20:	SW	Looking SW in office at NW corner of 2 nd floor
19 of 20:	N	Looking N toward corridor in office on S side on 2 nd floor with interior windows to corridor
20 of 20:	E	Looking E in SW west office on 2 nd floor with deteriorated and buckled wood floor

Note – Photos are keyed on existing floor plans in Figure 8 at end of nomination

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Figure Log:

- Figure 1: Context Map, Google Maps 2017
- Figure 2: Site Plan, Google Maps 2017
- Figure 3: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map – Sheet 465, 1909 Vol. 4 with 1951 update
- Figure 4: Photo of Michelson Building during construction, *Kansas City Journal Post*, 11 Mar 1923.
- Figures 5-7: Historic Views of Michelson Building and 3100 block of Troost, sources individually noted
- Figure 8: Photo Key – a) Site – Exterior Views
b) Current Floor Plans with Photo Key – Interior Views 1st and 2nd Floors
- Figure 9: Masonic Hall, 903 Harrison
- Figure 10: Meyer Building, 3923 Main
- Figure 11: Kansas City Power and Light Building
- Figure 12: General Tire Building, 1500 Baltimore (demolished)
- Figure 13: 3130 Troost Avenue
- Figure 14: National Cloak and Suit Company Building, 5401 Independence Avenue
- Figure 15: Whitehall Apartments, 361 Emmanuel Cleaver Boulevard
- Figure 16: Clyde Manor Apartments, 330-350 Armour Boulevard
- Figure 17: Olds Oakland Motor Co. Building, 1512-1518 Grand Avenue
- Figure 18: Automobile Merchandising Corporation of America, 1524 Grand Avenue
- Figure 19: Carnie Goudie Manufacturing Company Building, 514 W. 26th Street
- Figure 20: Nebraska State Capital
- Figure 21: Representative examples of the ZigZag Moderne phase of Art Deco
- Figure 22: Representative examples of the Streamline Moderne phase of Art Deco
- Figure 23: Representative example of the third and final phase of Art Deco – PWA Modern
- Figure 24: Diagram illustrating modern geometric details on Michelson Facade

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Summary

The Michelson Building is located at 3125 - 3133 Troost Avenue in the Midtown area of Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The two-story commercial building was designed by Kansas City architect William J. Koch and constructed by Patrick J. Morley in 1923 at a cost of \$60,000.¹ Measuring 100' wide by 68' deep, the two-story building has a rectangular footprint and a flat/tapered roof with parapet. The masonry load-bearing structure has brick perimeter walls, terracotta block partition walls and concrete columns and beams.

Beaux Arts Classicism is the overriding stylistic reference as exhibited by the building's classical configuration and ornament. However, a distinctive characteristic of the building is the inclusion of modern geometric patterns in the buildings ornament. With this combination of styles, the 1923 design of the Michelson Building reflects the architect's early experimentation with modern ornament. With a distinct separation between upper and lower facade, the building's form is a Two-Part Commercial Block and it is classified stylistically as a Commercial Style building with Beaux Arts and Art Deco detailing. The terracotta facade is classically configured with pilasters defining bays along the street facade. The parapet is multi-tiered with classically-influenced components including a prominent cornice with dentils. The top of the parapet with decidedly modern ornament almost resembles a blind balustrade - a feature popular in the Beaux Arts style. Detailing varies on the upper and lower facades, which are separated by a simple lower cornice that features a stylized inverted tulip pattern. Although separated into first and second floor components, the ornament on the both levels of the pilasters combine simplified geometric forms with classical swags, shields and moldings that are characteristic of the Beaux Arts style. While traditionally it was ground floor components of a building that were rusticated, it is the second-floor pilasters that feature projecting horizontal joints on the Michelson facade.

The Michelson Building retains its ornate terracotta facade with few modifications. The primary exterior modification is ca.1990 replacement of the upper windows and storefronts on the street facade. Despite the replacement storefronts and windows, the most significant characteristics of its original design – its terracotta facade designed during the transition from the Beaux Arts revival to the modern stylistic idiom that would become known as Art Deco – remains virtually unchanged. The interior of the building, particularly on the upper floor, retains features and finishes that convey its original design and function for commercial offices.

Elaboration

Setting

See Figure 1 at the end of the nomination for a context map illustrating the Midtown area positioned between Kansas City's downtown and The Paseo Boulevard. The 3100 block of Troost Avenue is a commercial block with abutting commercial buildings bordered by Linwood on the south and 31st Street on the north. At the time of its construction in 1923, the apartment buildings being built along Armour (34th Street), Linwood (32nd Street) and The Paseo Boulevard (four blocks west of Troost) provided a new market of local residents prompting the commercial development on Troost.

Located on the east side of the 3100 block of Troost Avenue, the Michelson Building is the third building from the south end of the block in a traditional commercial setting with adjacent buildings sharing a common setback and a public sidewalk running along the front of the buildings. Constructed in 1923, the building was one of the earliest commercial structures at this end of the block. To the south are the two-story Harkness Building built in 1926 and the one-story Firestone Building on the corner of Troost and Linwood built in 1930. To the north of the Michelson Building is the three-story Shankman Building constructed in 1929. With their construction spanning a period of years, these neighboring buildings reflect the transition from classical to modern designs. The Harkness Building is a simple, un-adorned

¹ City Building Permit #13355 3127-29-31-33 Troost Ave. Kansas City Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri, 1 Dec 1922.

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terracotta facade. Michelson, the earliest of these buildings, illustrates the early use of geometric forms in combination with elaborate Beaux Arts detailing. Constructed a few years later, the Shankman and Firestone Buildings reflect ZigZag Moderne, the early ornamental phase of Art Deco replete with modern stylized ornament. This cluster of four buildings at the south end of the block (east side) retains significant historic integrity. North of the Shankman Building is the Tycor property comprised of expanded and remodeled one and two-story bays;² the Westover Building on the northeast corner of 31st and Troost is the earliest extant building on this side of the block, a five-story office building built ca.1906. Figures 5 – 7 and Photos 1 and 2 provide historic and existing street views. The Woolworth Building, a one-story brick building located at 3120-3122 Troost across the street is individually listed on the National Register. Many of the remaining buildings on the west side of the block have experienced major modification; the Wirthman Building that housed the Isis Theater, a prominent building located at the NW corner of 31st and Troost, was demolished in 1997 and since 2011 the lot has been used as a park and ride and bus stop for the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority.

The Michelson Building has a rectangular footprint approximately 100' wide by 70' deep. Behind the building to the east are two apartment buildings fronting Forest Avenue. A vacant lot behind the Michelson Building historically housed small garages for residents of the two apartment buildings. Although it was not historically associated, the lot has now been combined with the Michelson Building lot. The current parcel spans approximately half of the depth of the block with no rear alley; an easement exists between the two apartment buildings off Forest Avenue for rear access. Additionally, the Michelson Building and the Shankman Building adjacent on the north were formerly combined in a single legal parcel. The boundary of the nominated property is the footprint of the Michelson Building and does not include the rear lot or adjacent Shankman Building as they were not historically associated with one another. See Figures 2 and 3 for views of the current and historic setting and site configuration.

Exterior

Located on the east side of the 3100 block of Troost Avenue, the building is in a traditional commercial setting with adjacent buildings on the north and south (Photos 1-2). As originally designed, the ground floor includes an entry bay at the north end and five commercial storefronts individually addressed at 3125 – 3133 (Photos 4 and 7). The front facade is terracotta and features ornate detailing combining modern geometric forms with the more traditional classically-derived ornament including heavy denticulated cornices, swag, shell, and shield motifs typical of the Beaux Arts style (Photos 5-7).

Rectangular piers divide the street facade into six bays. Detailing varies on the upper and lower facades which are separated by a simple lower cornice that features an inverted tulip pattern and vertical ribbing (Photo 5). The pilasters have a simple rectangular base and shaft featuring a stepped geometric pattern with a three-part angular drop pendant adorning the top of the column (Photos 4 and 5). A bead and reel molding separates the shaft of the column from its capital that features an oval cartouche with an "M" framed by acanthus leaves – all classical motifs (Photo 5). In contrast to the first-floor pilasters, the second-floor pilasters between upper-level windows feature an angular geometric pattern and horizontal bands with an ornate swag adorning the cap of each pier. A multi-tiered cornice at the parapet features a minute dentil course that provides a transition to the parapet above the second-floor pilasters (Photo 7). A simple projecting cornice with large dentils is topped by a wide band with narrow vertical panels. Alternating vertical panels on this top band feature the inverted stylized tulip motif that adorns the lower cornice. Semi-circular shell panels project at regular intervals above the roofline of the parapet (Photo 6). Although it incorporates simplified stylistic patterns, the configuration of the top band of the parapet is suggestive of a blind balustrade, a feature that was popular in the Beaux Arts style (Photos 3 and 7). Figure 24 illustrates the location of the modern geometric detailing that characterizes the Michelson facade as transitional.

² Tycor is the current contemporary name of this property that historically was comprised of three individual buildings, a two-story building in the center flanked by one-story buildings. The property is now combined in a single parcel and has contemporary facades that obscure the original facades.

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The only major alterations on the exterior of the building have been the ca. 1990s replacement of storefronts and upper windows on the street facade. The replacement windows are aluminum with 1/1 single-hung sashes in sets of three windows in each bay on the upper facade, except at the narrower entry bay on the north end which has a pair of windows. Figure 4 provides a historic view of the building during its 1923 construction. The photo clearly illustrates 1/1 sash upper windows although a 1955 photo (Figure 7) shows that the windows had been replaced with 3/1 sash windows. Although darker in color, the existing replacement windows and storefront match the style and configuration of the original units illustrating a clear attempt to select replacements compatible with the building's historic character.

The existing replacement storefronts are also aluminum-framed; they maintain the components of a traditional commercial storefront with large display windows, transom window and paneled bulkhead. Each storefront bay angles back to a recessed central entrance; some of which retain historic terrazzo or ceramic tile flooring in the recessed entry (Photos 4 and 11). The north entry bay is comprised of a pair of single-light replacement doors with a single-light arched transom panel. The distinguishing characteristics of the building entrance are classical in form and composition with a shallow arched pediment with scroll brackets and an entablature inscribed with "MICHELSON" in block letters. The pilasters framing the entry bay are like those along the storefront bays with acanthus leaves framing an oval cartouche with a carved "M" on the capital. In the entry bay, the only modern forms are the pilasters with no defined base or plinth and flat surfaces that have a subtle stepped rectangular pattern on the perimeter of the shaft (Photos 7 and 8).

Unlike the front facade, the secondary sides of the building are red brick with a simple concrete cap. Three- and two-story buildings abut the Michelson Building on the north and south sides respectively (Photo 1). Built in 1923, the Michelson building was one of the first commercial buildings on the south half of the block (east side). It was free-standing at the time of its construction and had windows at both levels on the north and south sides. Figure 4 provides view of building during construction illustrating windows on the north facade. Within six years buildings had been constructed on both sides of the Michelson Building blocking the original windows on the north and south. The rear facade, like the front, is six bays in width with four of the six bays having rear doors. On the rear facade the masonry openings feature three-tier arched brick lintels and include a single door and single windows at ground-floor bays and generally sets of two and four windows on the upper level (Photo 9). Original wood windows were 1/1 and 2/2 double-hung units formerly replaced on the front facade and extant although in poor condition, at a few locations on secondary facades.

Interior

The ground floor is comprised of storefront commercial spaces in five of the six bays. Current floor plans are provided in Figure 8b at the end of the nomination; original building plans have not been found. The northern-most bay is the building entrance that provides access to the basement and upper floor. The entry foyer features marble flooring and plaster walls and ceiling (Photo 13). Marble wainscoting is in place on one lobby wall and along the outside wall of the stair. A marble stairway provides access to the basement and second floor; the square paneled marble newel post is in place but the balustrade is missing (Photos 14 and 15). A secondary open metal stair, thought to be a later addition, is in place at the south end of the building (Photo 16). Shortly after the building opened, the southern two storefront bays were combined and occupied by a single tenant – the Community State Bank. The three other storefront spaces were located between the building entry on the north and the bank on the south. This basic configuration remains today although the storefronts have been replaced (Photos 4 and 10). Extant is original (or early) flooring at some storefront entrances that includes both ceramic hex tile with the address inlaid and terrazzo in a geometric pattern although both materials have some damage at most locations (Photos 4 and 11). The commercial spaces generally have contemporary finishes including suspended ceilings and some gypsum board walls (Photos 10 and 12). Plaster walls and ceilings are extant in some locations generally in fair to poor condition. Terrazzo floors may be extant in some

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commercial spaces but are currently obscured by tile; terrazzo is visible in isolated locations where there is damaged or missing VAT.

A basement spans the entire building. Although newspaper articles at the time of the building's opening reported that the basement would have a bowling alley and billiards hall, there is no indication of either today. The basement has an exposed concrete floor, concrete columns and beams, concrete ceiling, and exposed masonry walls. It is currently used for storage and mechanical space.

The main stair provides access to the second floor near the center of the north end of the floor with restrooms located opposite the stair in the northeast corner. A corridor extends from the main stair through the center of the second floor providing access to offices along the east and west sides of the building. See Figure 8b for existing floor plan and Photos 17-20 for current views of the corridor and representative offices. At the south end of the floor the corridor is truncated and the secondary stairway (non-original) is located along the south wall in the southeast office (Photo 16). Two metal-framed gabled skylights are located above the corridor providing natural light into the corridor (Photo 17). The skylights are in poor condition and are the source of water infiltration that has severely damaged plaster walls and ceilings. The corridor is distinguished by terrazzo flooring and interior windows that provide natural light from the skylights into perimeter offices (Photo 19). Hardwood floors, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings are extant throughout but in poor condition due primarily to moisture infiltration (Photos 16, 17, and 20). A few modern block partition walls are extant with a plaster finish and some frame walls are in place with a gypsum board finish.

While the configuration of individual office spaces has experienced some alteration, the basic circulation pattern is original with few modifications. The office entrances off the corridor retain original 1/1 stile and rail wood doors with operable single-light transoms. The corridor windows are fixed single-light sashes in sets of two and three. Wood door and window casings, as well as baseboards are present at most walls although some baseboards are deteriorated with moisture damage (Photos 18-20). Most wood trim has a painted finish (Photos 19-20). Historic ceiling-mounted circular white light fixtures are present at a few locations on the first and second floors (Photo 15).

Integrity

The Michelson Building retains good integrity of location and setting. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is moderate, compromised somewhat by the replacement windows and storefronts and by damage to wood floors, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings from moisture, as well as installation of contemporary finishes over historic finishes. The building retains integrity of feeling and association conveying its historic commercial and office functions.

As seen in Figure 4 – a view of the building during construction, the terracotta facade with its combination of classical Beaux Arts detailing and modern geometric and stylized forms is intact and clearly reflects the building's original design. Original double-hung wood windows are in place in select locations on secondary facades. The original windows included 1/1 and 2/2 double-hung sashes configured in single, paired, and sets of three and four units. At the time of construction, the front facade had 1/1 windows but by 1955, they had been replaced with 3/1 windows (Figure 7).

The primary exterior alteration was the ca. 1990s installation of replacement windows and storefronts on the street facade. An attempt was clearly made to provide a compatible replacement although the dark color of the frames makes the windows and storefronts stand out when compared to the light color of the original frames (Photo 2 and Figure 4). The existing windows match the 1/1 style of the original upper windows and the replacement storefronts retain a recessed entrance, bulkhead, large display windows, and glass transom – the traditional components of a historic commercial storefront. The only other known exterior alteration is removal of lantern-style light fixtures that are seen along the storefront in historic photos. The light fixtures were extant in 1935 but had been removed by 1955 (Figures 6 and 7).

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The basic plan configuration and finishes at the building entrance, foyer, main stairway, and corridors remain with few modifications. Extant distinctive interior features and finishes include the original marble stairs, floor and wainscoting in the foyer and terrazzo floors in first-floor commercial spaces and the upper-floor corridor. Distinctive features on the upper floor include wood-framed doors and windows, and operable transoms at office entrances off the central corridor. The gabled skylights, as well as plaster walls and ceilings are extant but in poor condition in the corridor. Interior alterations include modification of a few original partition walls and construction of some new partition walls within the commercial and office spaces. Suspended ceilings have been installed in most of the ground-floor commercial spaces. Wood floors are in place in upper-floor offices but are generally in poor condition. The primary threat to the building is lack of maintenance where roof and skylight failure has allowed extensive moisture infiltration that has severely damaged second-floor finishes. The building is open air on the upper floor with windows or glass missing at most openings on the rear facade. Despite these issues, the Michelson Building retains significant historic and architectural integrity clearly portraying its original design and function.

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n/a
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Summary

The Michelson Building, located at 3125 – 3133 Troost Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri, Jackson County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a 1920s transitional building. The building reflects the evolution from the traditional revival styles that had dominated architectural design for the preceding decades to Art Deco's initial period – the ZigZag Moderne phase that gained favor by the late 1920s.

Reflecting a transitional stylistic period in the 1920s, the Michelson Building is among Kansas City's earliest structures to incorporate simplified geometric patterns in the design of commercial buildings. During this time designers sought to embrace the modern idiom but did so in a conservative manner that continued to use classic ordering as well as traditional placement of ornament. The terracotta facade features traditional Beaux Arts Classicism that was typical of buildings designed in the 1910s and early-1920s. Local architect William Koch's utilized a traditional configuration with a symmetrical facade, regularly-spaced pilasters, pronounced cornice bands with dentils and an elaborate parapet that resembles a blind balustrade, components that are all characteristic of Beaux Arts Classicism. The building's ornamentation however, incorporates the elaborate classical detailing of flowing swags, shields and acanthus leaf motifs combined with simplified geometric forms and stylized floral patterns. The design incorporates subtle geometric forms with classical motifs on a classically-ordered facade introducing a modern tone to a familiar classic composition. This approach exemplifies the transitional period in Kansas City's history when designers incorporated or substituted simplified, stylized ornament for conventional detailing; this transition evolved into the first Zigzag Moderne phase of Art Deco style.

The period of significance for the Michelson Building is 1923, the building's date of construction. The intact 1923 terracotta facade reflects the early use of modern ornament on Kansas City's commercial buildings several years prior to official arrival of the first Art Deco period – Zigzag Moderne - as the new truly American style exemplified by a new style of ornament that would adorn commercial buildings by the late 1920s in Kansas City and across the nation. The wide acceptance of the Art Deco style by the end of the decade represented the formal break from the revivalist traditions.

Elaboration

Classicism Dominates the Early Twentieth-Century

In the United States two cities had the greatest influence on architecture and style. While New York City was the most heavily populated city in the United States, Chicago was the home of the first steel-frame skyscraper, the ten-story Home Insurance Building (1885). Hosting the Columbian Exposition in 1893, Chicago's influence on American cityscapes was evident in the City Beautiful Movement and the revival of Classic and Gothic styles as exemplified by the fair buildings. Most commercial buildings during this time were influenced by the French academic practice that was fostered by the Ecole des Beaux Arts School in Paris where many American architects were trained.³ The academic principles of the Paris School emphasized the study of Greek and Roman structures, composition and symmetry.⁴

Beaux Arts Classicism is a revival style generally dating from 1890 to 1920 and seen in the design of many late-19th and early-20th century buildings from libraries to railroad stations. The style is characterized by large and grandiose compositions with an exuberance of detail and variety of finishes. Common features of the style are projecting facades or pavilions with massive columns typically paired, and enriched moldings. Pronounced cornices and embellished entablatures are typically topped with a tall parapet, attic story or balustrade.⁵ Further characteristics of the style are a rusticated stone base, grand

³ Richard Longstreth. *The Buildings of Main Street*. Washington, D.C. The Preservation Press, 1987. 24-50.

⁴ John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy B. Schwartz, *What Style is it? A Guide to American Architecture*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983. 67.

⁵ John J.G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981. 67.

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arched openings, and ornamentation that feature decorative swags, cartouches, medallions and sculptural figures.⁶

Numerous Beaux Arts-styled buildings can be found Kansas City including prominent public buildings such as Union Station⁷ and monumental private buildings such as the Masonic Hall⁸ (NR listed 1972 and 1980 respectively). Built 1909-1911, the Masonic Hall at 903 Harrison reflects the formal symmetry and use of classical forms characteristic of Beaux-Arts Classicism. The building embodies primary features that are representative of the style including a rusticated stone base, projecting end bays, massive paired columns with elaborate capitals, a prominent cornice band with dentils, window surrounds featuring scroll brackets and a projecting balustrade over the central entrance with a prominent cartouche. The Masonic Hall is one of the city's early twentieth-century buildings that epitomize Beaux Arts Classicism (Figure 9).

Although typically less monumental due in large part to the street setting, the Beaux Arts style was also popular among commercial buildings. The Meyer Building at 3923 Main, built in 1926, is an excellent example of Beaux Arts detailing and composition. The symmetrical terracotta facade features prominent end bays capped by a pedimented gable with classic scroll detailing. The center bay has a prominent parapet that features a blind balustrade characteristic of Beaux Arts Classicism. Like many commercial buildings, the upper windows and storefronts are former replacements but the terracotta upper facade clearly exhibits the building's original design and detailing making it a good example of a commercial interpretation of the Beaux Arts style (Figure 10).

The 1920s – A Transitional Time in Architecture and in Kansas City

When the Michelson Building was constructed in 1923, Kansas City, much as the rest of the country, was going through political, economic and social changes that followed World War I and this transition was reflected in commercial development and architectural styles. In *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, historian David Gebhard notes that "a recurring theme of the 1920s and 1930s, both in traditional design and architecture...was the desire to seek out new forms or modifications of old forms to express the continually changing character and accelerated tempo of the new age."⁹ Most practicing architects were Classicists, many of whom had been trained to accept rules of composition and decoration that were taught in the Paris Beaux Arts School; but many were ready for change and began experimenting with a new simplified form of ornamentation.

A world-wide competition for a design of a new home for the Chicago Tribune in 1922 caught the attention of architects across the country. Ironically, it was Eliel Saarinen's second-place design that first illustrated the effective combination of a new progressive design with traditional ordering. John Mead Howells and Raymond M. Hood of New York received the commission with a Gothic design but many architects thought Saarinen's design was superior. Many would see this contest as the spark that ignited the Moderne Movement in cities across the United States.

In Kansas City, the postwar 1920s brought a layer of sophistication; one with a nuanced simplicity that maintained an appreciation for classical order embodied by the newly created parks and boulevards, but embraced the Modern Movement in the buildings on and around them.

In order to appreciate the significance of the transition from classical to modern architectural styles, it is important to understand the various phases of the Art Deco style – the first style to effectively break with

⁶ Poppeliers, et.al., 67.

⁷ M. Patricia Holmes, State Historical Survey and Planning Office, Union Station National Register Nomination, 1972; Boundary Increase 2004.

⁸ Elaine Ryder Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Kansas City Masonic Temple National Register Nomination, 1980.

⁹ David Gebhard. *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Preservation Press 1996. 1.

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the revival traditions. The term Art Deco received its name from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* held in Paris in 1925. The exhibition encouraged originality and urged artists to turn their backs on classical and revival styles. Buildings at the Expo used new forms including circles, arcs and rectilinear patterns tied together with geometric precision. The message was clear – “Traditionalism was passé, Art Deco had arrived.”¹⁰

In the Midwest, this transformation was taking hold. New York architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue’s design for the Nebraska State Capital at Lincoln (1922-1928) aptly demonstrated that the classical tradition could, through a process of simplification, be responded to as both traditional and modern (Figure 20). This blending of past and present could produce an image that offered the comfort of the past coupled with a look to the future.¹¹ Selected through a competition, Goodhue’s design was the only proposal that was not dominated by Beaux-Arts principles. “With the selection of his design came the message that Americans were tired of imitation and ready for creation.”¹²

Dr. George Ehrlich, a Kansas City historian, notes that during this time in Kansas City, characteristics of office buildings generally retained the Beaux Arts formalism with symmetrical design of the primary facade and use of ornament integral to the overall design concept however; within a short time, ornament would be confined to entrances only and ultimately be rejected completely.¹³

Ehrlich dates the city’s acceptance of modern design to 1929-30 due primarily to the use of geometric ornament on skyscrapers after 1929. He recognizes the Kansas City Power and Light Building built 1930-1931 as a major step toward modernism and one of Kansas City’s best examples of the Art Deco style.¹⁴ Alastair Duncan, in his 1986 book *American Art Deco*, notes that Kansas City underwent a building boom in the 1920s and 30s resulting in a wide range of well-preserved Art Deco architectural elements on parking garages, apartment houses, commercial and municipal buildings throughout the city, the pinnacle of which was the 1930-1931 Kansas City Power and Light Building.¹⁵ Listed in the National Register in 2002, the Power and Light Building¹⁶ stood as Missouri’s tallest building for years and remains a prominent feature of Kansas City’s downtown skyline. The building features a fully integrated modern facade designed with stepped upper floors and stylized Art Deco detailing in the form of sunbursts that were used to symbolize light and energy. The sunburst detail was incorporated throughout the building from the tower at the top of the building down to interior detailing. The lower level of the facade features smooth terracotta panels with ornate bas-relief panels above the building entrance and at spandrel panels between windows. The building is an excellent example of the richly ornamented Zigzag Moderne phase of Art Deco characterized by its stepped form and use of decorative geometric forms including zigzags and chevrons, and stylized plant and animal motifs. The Kansas City Power and Light Building endures as one of the city’s finest examples of the style (Figure 11).

Duncan further reflects that “Kansas City’s real charm however, lies in the scope of glazed terracotta friezes which adorn its commercial buildings.”¹⁷ As with other styles, Kansas City had its own interpretation of Art Deco that was used on buildings of various scale. “The fluid low relief ornamentation of floral motifs, chevrons, zigzags and fluting was cast in terra cotta or stone, and applied to buildings of all

¹⁰ Shifra Stein. “Boss Tom’s Deco Empire.” *Historic Preservation* July/August 1986. 28.

¹¹ Tulsa Foundation for Architecture. *Tulsa Art Deco*. Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, 2001. 18.

¹² Frederick C. Luebke ed. *A Harmony of the Arts: The Nebraska State Capitol*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. 27.

¹³ Dr. George Ehrlich. *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990*. University of Missouri Press: Columbia, MO:1979, revised 1992, 97.

¹⁴ Ibid, 94-95.

¹⁵ Alastair Duncan. *American Art Deco*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986. 198-199.

¹⁶ Cathy Ambler. *Kansas City Power and Light Company Building National Register Nomination*. Washington, D.C., 2003.

¹⁷ Duncan, 198-199.

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height ranges.”¹⁸ Art Deco ornamentation is visible throughout the city on all types of commercial buildings including apartments, hotels, banks, office buildings and department stores.¹⁹

Features that distinguish the Power and Light Building namely the location and style of ornament can be found on commercial buildings throughout the city. An article in the National Trust’s magazine *Historic Preservation* (1986) recognized the General Tire Building, a three-story commercial building constructed in 1928 at 1500 Baltimore, as the forerunner of the city’s Art Deco Buildings.²⁰ Lost in the 1980s, the General Tire Building embodied Art Deco style in its form with ribbed vertical pilasters rising above the roofline to emphasize verticality, and in its ornamentation with stylized sunbursts in bas-relief panels (Figure 12).

In *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, David Gebhard identifies three phases of Art Deco: Zigzag Moderne, Streamline Moderne, and PWA Moderne. The transitional phase that substituted simplified, stylized ornament for conventional detailing evolved into the first Zigzag Moderne phase of Art Deco. The Zigzag Moderne phase is characterized by its ornamentation which employed decorative zigzags, chevrons and geometric forms as well as stylized plant and animal motifs. The second Art Deco phase was largely impacted by the Great Depression and deemed ornament frivolous, thus minimizing it. Commonly called Streamline Moderne, the primary articulation of a building’s facade was the manipulation of form and use of smooth materials rather than applied ornament. Then classical ordering was resurrected in the final Art Deco period of the late 1930s and early 1940s, when New Deal programs spurred one of the largest periods of construction of public and institutional buildings. Known as PWA Moderne, this phase used both the classical detailing characteristic of public buildings with the features of Zigzag Moderne and Streamlined Moderne but tended to be simpler in its detailing than its Classical predecessors.²¹ Representative examples of Kansas City buildings portraying each of these phases of the Art Deco style can be found in Figures 21-23.

It is Zigzag Moderne, the first Art Deco phase known for its use of stylized ornament that is most relevant to the Michelson Building because this phase began by applying geometric forms - new modern ornament - to classically-ordered buildings and sometimes, introducing these modern forms alongside the more elaborate classical ornament.

During the post-WWI era decorative building materials such as terracotta ornamentation became more widely available and economical for the average building. About the time that Art Deco emerged as an ornamental style, terracotta became mass produced making the sheathing for entire facades as well as, the ornate low-relief panels that came to distinguish the early phase of Art Deco affordable and available to the masses. Most of Kansas City’s early Art Deco buildings have a terracotta facade or at least terracotta details as ornamentation on the facade. Terracotta panels and ornamental features were widely available from local and regional firms. Kansas City firms including the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, Kansas City Terra Cotta and Faience Company and the Western Terra Cotta Company of Kansas City, Kansas, all offered varying forms and colors of architectural terracotta.²² Used since the latter portion of the nineteenth century, terracotta was first used as fire-proof building material and became popular for its flexibility as ornament.²³ The material had been widely used for elaborate ornament on traditional buildings in the classical and revival styles that predated the Art Deco style and grew in popularity through the early phase of Art Deco. Likewise, terracotta was the preferred material seen in many of the transitional buildings that combined simplified modern forms with the more elaborate and

¹⁸ Lazarski, Andrea J. *Bryant Building National Register Nomination*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1989.

¹⁹ Melanie A. Betz. *Art Deco Survey Kansas City, MO*. Kansas City: Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1989, 4.

²⁰ Stein, 30.

²¹ Gebhard, 2-5.

²² Betz, 4.

²³ Thomas C. Jester, ed. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1995. 157-159.

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exuberant revival-style detailing. The emergence of these new geometric and stylized patterns on terracotta facades illustrates the availability of modern motifs in the terracotta industry by the early to mid-1920s. The acceptance of the modern idiom slowly took hold during this time.

“Through modernization of traditional imagery, Art Deco provided a gentle transition to the new age without severing our ties with the past... suggesting that we could have the best of both the past and future.”²⁴ Revival-style buildings and buildings with an eclectic mix of ornament within a classical composition continued to be constructed throughout the city in the 1920s. Architects began to experiment with geometric forms, generally combined with familiar classical motifs, early in the 1920s several years prior to the design of the city’s first Art Deco commercial buildings later in the decade. The Michelson Building reflects this transitional period.

The Michelson Building reflects a Transitional Design

The Michelson Building, built in 1923, pre-dates the earliest of the city’s modernistic skyscrapers and Art Deco commercial buildings throughout the city. The Michelson Building is significant as a representative of the early use of modern geometric detailing combined with traditional Beaux Arts detailing on a classically-configured commercial facade. The design reflects the early introduction of modern forms that led to a transition from revival styles based on historic precedent to the ZigZag Moderne, the first phase of Art Deco characterized by its simplified, stylized ornament.

The Michelson Building exemplifies the transition from the revival styles that dominated the architecture of the preceding decades to the first phase of Art Deco that would come to define the late 1920s. The building is an excellent example of this transition because it incorporates detailing in both revival and modern motifs. Unlike the exuberant ornamentation characteristic of the Beaux Arts Classicism, the Michelson facade utilizes familiar forms in swags, acanthus leaves and shields and projecting cornices with dentils but the ornamentation and articulation is subtle compared to traditional examples of the style. And unlike the ZigZag Moderne phase of Art Deco that was characterized by stylized flora, volutes and sunbursts often in the form of polychrome bas-relief panels, the Michelson facade exhibits a reserved introduction of modern forms with its use of subtle geometric patterns on the pilasters and stylized floral patterns on the lower cornice and parapet. This distinction can be seen in Photos 5-7 of the Michelson Building compared to the Shankman and Greystone Apartment Buildings seen in Figure 21 as well as Figure 24 that identifies the specific modern detailing used on the Michelson facade.

The Michelson Building reflects the early experimentation with modern ornament on a terracotta facade that embodies stylistic references to Beaux-Arts Classicism. This restrained combining of traditional and modern forms characterizes the transitional phase that led to emergence of the Art Deco style in the late 1920s. Within a few short years, most commercial designs incorporated simplified, stylized modern ornament even when classical ordering guided a building’s massing and location of the ornament. It was the type of ornament with stylized and geometric forms that distinguished the early Art Deco period and led to the name ZigZag Moderne.

Comparable Kansas City Buildings

A windshield survey of the downtown, midtown, and Troost Avenue neighborhoods combined with a review of the available Historic Inventory Surveys of Kansas City’s Central Business District (1980/1994), the Midtown Area (1981-1985) and the city’s Art Deco Survey (1989) helped to identify other transitional commercial buildings.²⁵ However, resources that demonstrate the evolution from revival styles to the

²⁴ *Tulsa Art Deco*, 18.

²⁵ Sherry Piland and Ellen J. Uguccioni. *Midtown Survey, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri* Kansas City: Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1985, reprinted 2008 and Sherry Piland, *Central Business District Survey Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri*. Kansas City: Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1980, updated 1994, and Betz, *Art Deco Survey*.

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early Art Deco period are not abundant; a limited number of examples were found spanning a variety of building types and forms.

The building across the street from the Michelson Building at 3130 Troost is an excellent example of a terracotta facade executed in a revival style. The facade is distinguished by its red tile pent roof above an elaborate ornate frieze and paired columns that are characteristic of the Beaux Arts style (Figure 13). The building has been altered; the lower facade has been covered with contemporary sheathing and the windows and storefronts are replacement units but the original terracotta remains exposed on the upper facade. Built the same year as the Michelson Building, the building at 3130 Troost illustrates the continued use of Classical motifs at the time that the architect Wm. Koch was experimenting with simplified modern forms on the Michelson facade.

The National Cloak and Suit Company Building at 5401 Independence is a 12-story building designed by Max Dunning. Constructed in 1919, it is the earliest Kansas City example found to incorporate simplified modern geometric detailing (Figure 14). The concrete building features banding in red brick with contrasting concrete and brick detailing that is geometric in form. The main facade is comprised of projecting end bays each with a center bay defined by full-height pilasters capped above the 12th floor with concrete panels that feature a chevron pattern. On the ground floor, a central entry bay features panels with stepped concrete detailing above a projecting canopy. The panels incorporate geometric detailing including diamond, square, and X-shaped forms. Largely due to scale, other than the use of the geometric forms in the ornament of both buildings, the National Cloak and Suit Building shares little in common with the Michelson Building. However, the transition from classically-based revival styles to the new modern idiom in the design of commercial buildings generally dates to the early 1920s making the National Cloak Building an early example of the trend. The National Cloak Building was the only example of this transition found in Kansas City that pre-dates the design for the Michelson Building.

The Whitehall Apartments at 361 Emmanuel Clever Boulevard (formerly Brush Creek Boulevard) was designed by William Koch (architect of the Michelson Building) in 1926.²⁶ Constructed three years after the Michelson Building, the design illustrates a similar approach incorporating modern geometric forms in a revival-styled building (Figure 15).²⁷ Whitehall is a traditional Progressive Era apartment building with defined base, shaft and cap and a symmetrical facade with formal central entry. It is executed in the Gothic Revival style with stone quoining on the tan brick facade and gothic detailing executed in terracotta. While retaining traditional ordering of the facade and the use of classical ornament, the design also introduces modern components including full-height vertical window surrounds that emphasize the building's verticality and geometric forms in the ornament at the central entrance, window surrounds and parapet. Like the 1923 Michelson design, Koch's 1926 design of the Whitehall Apartments is an early example of his experimentation with simplified modern forms prior to Art Deco's emergence at the end of the decade. The apartment building differs from the Michelson Building in scale and function but shares the use of modern geometric forms in the detailing on a classically-configured building.

Surveyed as part of the Kansas City Art Deco Survey in 1989, the Whitehall Inventory Form notes that with the building appears to be a forerunner to the design for the Clyde-Manor Apartments, an Art Deco Building at 330-350 E. Armour Boulevard, built 1930. The Clyde-Manor Apartment Building is a 9-story brick building with two-level bi-color terracotta facade at ground level (Figure 16). The building exhibits English Perpendicular composition but the detailing on lower floors and at the top of the building are

²⁶ Cydney E. Millstein and Maryann Warfield, *Windsor Hall Apartments National Register Nomination*, Washington, DC: National Parks Service: 2010. 8:7.

²⁷ The Historic Inventory Form for the Whitehall Apartments (1989 Kansas City Art Deco Survey) identifies Charles A. Smith as the architect of the Whitehall Apartment building however, the 2010 National Register nomination for the Windsor Hall Apartments lists Whitehall among Koch's commission's and discusses the relationship between Koch and Harry Fisher, a local contractor recognized as builder of a number of Kansas City's apartment buildings in this period. See Section 8, pages 8-9 and footnote 28 in the Windsor Hall nomination for additional discussion of the authors' Fisher and Koch research.

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decidedly modern. The lower facade features bas-relief panels that are characteristic of the ZigZag Moderne phase of Art Deco. A comparison of these two apartment buildings helps to illustrate the evolution of the Art Deco style in the design of the city's apartment buildings between 1920 and 1930, much as the 1923 Michelson Building served as a precursor to the Art Deco facades on commercial buildings by the late 1920s. The Michelson Building shares the subtle use of geometric detailing with the Whitehall Apartments where the Clyde-Manor Apartment Building incorporates ornate stylized relief panels that became characteristic of the early phase of Art Deco. Whitehall and Michelson illustrate the early use of modern forms as the use of classical styles transitioned to modern in the form of the ZigZag Moderne – the early phase of Art Deco. The Clyde-Manor Apartments reflects a combination of classical and modern styles but the modern detailing is more advanced and typical of the ZigZag Moderne phase.

The best comparisons to the Michelson Building are 1920s commercial buildings that featured terracotta facades incorporating modern geometric forms in otherwise classical designs. The building found that most closely resembles the Michelson Building is located at 1512-1516 Grand Avenue. Constructed in 1909 at a cost of \$60,000, the building initially housed the Olds Oakland Motor Company and the Auto Specialty Company.²⁸ The existing terracotta facade dates to ca. 1920s (Figure 17). The facade features classical detailing including a projecting upper and lower cornice with dentils and egg and dart molding at the parapet cap. The 1920s terracotta facade has projecting cornices and incorporates subtle detailing with both traditional and geometric forms. While these details are classical in nature, the ornament is subtle and minimal. The facade features restrained horizontal banding and pilasters with a band with circles transitioning to the capitals. The existing windows and storefronts are contemporary replacements that are not in keeping with the building's historic character. Dating to the early 1920s, the two buildings share the dominant feature of a flat/smooth terracotta facade with subtle detailing. While the Michelson Building reflects more ornamental detailing in the application of both Beaux Arts and Modern detailing, the building at 1512-1518 Grand Avenue provides a restrained example of this same transitional period between classically-derived and modern ornament. The Michelson Building is a stronger representative of the transitional phase between classical and modern designs.

Just down the street is another two-story building with a terracotta facade that incorporates classical and geometric detailing in its ornamentation. Constructed in 1928 at 1524 Grand for the Automobile Merchandising Corporation of America,²⁹ the building features a unique storefront with twin deeply-recessed entrances at the end bays flanking a center pedestal display case (Figure 18). A narrow molding defines the interior edge of the pilasters. The vertical molding connects to a two tiered cornice above the upper windows, below the parapet to frame the facade. The two-tier cornice bands feature a geometric pattern with interlocking circles on the lower band with a flowing vine pattern above. Similar to the Michelson Building, the parapet on the Grand Building is capped by a blind balustrade with urn-like balusters a feature characteristic of the Beaux Arts style. The vertical emphasis created by the framed facade and lack of separation between the upper and lower facade is characteristically modern as are the geometric detailing on the cornice. The combination of the two styles provides another example of a transitional design that reflects the evolution from the revival styles to the early Art Deco period. Constructed in the late 1920s, the building at 1524 Grand incorporates modern tenets in the facade configuration but the use of modern geometric detailing is minimal. The Grand Building almost reflects an eclectic design with modern facade configuration with Beaux Arts detailing. The Michelson Building provides an earlier and better example of the early use of geometric ornament on a classically-inspired facade.

A small industrial building at 514 26th Street provides an example of another building type illustrating the evolution between revival styles and modern detailing in the transitional period of the 1920s. The Carnie-Goudie Manufacturing Company Building (Rosewin Coats Company) was built in 1925.³⁰ The 4-story

²⁸ Betz. *Art Deco Survey* (Historic Inventory Form for 1512 Grand).

²⁹ *Ibid* (Historic Inventory Form for 1524 Grand).

³⁰ *Ibid* (Historic Inventory Form for Rosewin Coats Company Building).

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building is tan brick with stone storefront surrounds on ground floor and ornate detailing at a canted corner entry (Figure 19). The parapet is stepped in a pattern that resembles crenulations and window surrounds at the corner entry bay feature quoins – both details characteristic of the Gothic Revival style. The stone surround above the entry bay frames the windows on the upper facade creating a vertical orientation to the narrow corner bay. Storefront bays are located along the west and south street facades. The west half of the building has stone piers with simple bases and reeded capitals while the bays on the east half of the south facade feature brick piers with stone quoins framing each bay. An entablature that spans between the piers features two distinct and contrasting patterns. The bays nearest the corner entry on the west half of the building feature a geometric diamond pattern along the entablature. An entry bay in the center of the south facade and the two storefronts east of the entry have a wide entablature with a bracketed cornice. In contrast to the simple geometric forms on the west storefronts, the eastern bays have elaborate classical motifs with scrolls and shields. The design reflects a clear mixing of styles that serves to illustrate the distinction in the revival versus modern styles. The combination of classically-derived and modern geometric ornament is similar on the Carnie-Goudie and Michelson Buildings. Both buildings reflect a transitional design; the Michelson Building being constructed two years prior to the Carnie-Goudie Building. The other primary distinctions in these two comparable buildings are the Carnie-Goudie's function as an industrial versus commercial building, its large scale, and the use of a brick versus terracotta facade. As discussed above, the use of smooth terracotta panels across the facade provides a subtle contrast with the finely detailed terracotta ornament. The terracotta ornament actually stands out more on the brick facade but the combination of brick and terracotta fails to provide the smooth flowing lines with horizontal banding that is prominent on the Michelson facade.

Back on Troost Avenue, one only has to look to the neighboring Shankman Building at 3115-3123 to examine a late 1920s commercial facade that represents the arrival of modern design in commercial buildings - the ZigZag Moderne phase of Art Deco (Figure 21). Completed in 1929, the three-story Shankman Building has a terracotta facade that features smooth linear forms with ornate spandrel panels that group upper windows to create a vertical emphasis. The ornamentation combines geometric patterns with ornate bas-relief panels featuring stylized volutes and flora with subtle background coloring. The central building entrance is distinguished from the storefront bays by ornate bas-relief panels on the underside of the recessed entry as well capping the entry surround. The bas-relief panels featuring stylized forms are a common feature shared among many of the city's early Art Deco buildings. Constructed in 1929, the Shankman Building reflects the early Art Deco style signaling that the early experimentation incorporating subtle geometric forms as the first vestige of the modern idiom had fully transitioned into the ornamental ZigZag Moderne phase of Art Deco among commercial buildings of all size and functions.

Constructed six years prior to the Shankman Building, the Michelson Building represents the gradual transition that took place in the 1920s as designers began to utilize simplified geometric forms in the ornament on their building designs. This ultimately led to a break from the revivalist styles of past decades and acceptance of the Art Deco style. The Shankman Building is an excellent example of ZigZag Moderne – the early Art Deco phase that was distinguished by the use of geometric and stylized modern ornament that was in sharp contrast to the fussy elaborate detailing that was characteristic of the revival styles.

A Transitional Time on Troost Avenue

The Michelson Building was constructed following World War I on a Kansas City street that was experiencing a dramatic transformation. By the 1890s Troost Avenue up to 77th Street was inside the city limits; had a state-of-the-art streetcar system running to 33rd Street; and was known as "Millionaire's Row" due to the number of large, stately homes owned by Kansas City's wealthiest residents. In 1883 Webster Withers owned forty acres that included what is now the east side of the 3100 Block of Troost Avenue and

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built his home on the "country road."³¹ In less than a decade Withers would see this area as a great business venture and moved his residence farther south. In 1910 with a population of 248,381, Kansas City experienced new single and multi-family dwellings being constructed with the heaviest concentration in the south and east.³² Between 1920 and 1927, 30,000 new family residences were constructed, many of which were in the form of large apartment buildings or apartment hotels, often clustered in neighborhoods such as those that sprung up on Armour Boulevard.³³ The housing spike was accompanied by new schools, churches, hospitals, banks and retail shops.

Upon its completion in the 1920s, George Kessler's Parks and Boulevards design for the city included Armour, Linwood, and The Paseo Boulevards, virtually encompassing the 3100 block of Troost Ave creating a popular Midtown residential area with a bustling commercial area at its core. See Figures 1-3 for existing and historic neighborhood context and Figures 5-6 for historic street views in the 1920s and 1930s. A 1911 *Kansas City Star* article called Thirty-First and Troost Avenue, "a town within a city."³⁴ By 1919 the lot on the northwest corner of Troost and Linwood sold for the highest price per square foot outside of downtown.³⁵ By the late 1920s Troost Avenue was widened and paved making it the longest street in the city. By the end of the decade, a street lighting system was installed and Troost was zoned for commercial business from 27th to 75th streets.³⁶ In 1926 as the city's population neared 400,000, the corner of Linwood Blvd. and Troost Ave. was thought to be the center of Kansas City's population.³⁷

The Michelson Building – Designer, Builder, and Tenants

Constructed in 1923, the building at 3125 – 3133 S. Troost was named for its owner, Edward Samuel Michelson. Michelson, born in 1888 in Warsaw, Poland, immigrated to the United States in 1906 and became a naturalized citizen in 1914.³⁸ Michelson was an astute businessman with many interests in the transportation and construction industries. Early in his Kansas City career he was a tire distributor and owned an auto parts-related factory.³⁹ By the 1920s he had moved his focus to property development. The building that bears his name at 3125-3133 Troost was his first known building venture. In later years he continued to buy and develop land primarily in the area of Paseo and Vine between 25th and 27th Streets.⁴⁰

The newly opened Michelson Building had the following tenants listed in the 1924 city directory; the five street front bays included S&S Recreation Parlor (3123) sharing space with Homer Frerking Photo (3123), Swyden Rug & Drapery (3125), Baker Furniture (3125-27), and Western Auto was at 3129.⁴¹ On the second floor the National Benevolent Society (206) and Main Realty (209) were tenants. The Community State Bank was in place in the south storefront space at 3131-33 by 1925.⁴²

³¹ "New Troost Replaces Old." *Kansas City Star*, 14 Aug 2017.

³² Gibson, Campbell. "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990." U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper Number: POP-WP027, June 1998, accessed online on 18 June 2017 at <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html>.

³³ "Big Years for Builders." *Kansas City Star*, 16 Jan 1927.

³⁴ Mary Jo Draper, *Kansas City's Historic Midtown Neighborhoods (Images of America)*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015, 101.

³⁵ "Morris Shankman Breaks Ground at 3115-3121 Troost." *Kansas City Journal-Post*, 21 May 1929.

³⁶ "Troost Avenue Gains Ground as North-South Artery of Industry." *Kansas City Journal Post*, 28 Dec 1929.

³⁷ "What is the Center of Population in Kansas City?" *Kansas City Star*, 7 Feb 1926.

³⁸ When Michelson left his homeland, Warsaw was a part of the Russian empire and remained so until after WWI.

³⁹ Ancestry.com. *1920 and 1930 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2002.

⁴⁰ "Edward S. Michelson" (obituary) *Kansas City Star*, 9 Aug 1947.

⁴¹ Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

⁴² Ibid.

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Michelson Building
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Michelson hired Kansas City architect William J. Koch to design the building. William Julian Koch (1888-1947) was born in Covington, KY on January 15, 1880. Koch began his career in Kansas City in 1910 as a draftsman for the Phoenix Stone and Lime Company.⁴³ Koch opened his architecture business in 1923 in the Mutual Building in downtown Kansas City.⁴⁴ Koch, best known as the architect of single- and multi-family residential buildings, designed more than thirty-four buildings in Kansas City including the Hollywood Apartments (1927) at 1027 E 9th, three apartment hotels on Locust (1004, 1016 and 1017 built in 1924 and 1925) and one addressed at 814 Troost in 1927.⁴⁵ Koch's work also included the Gillham Court Apartments and Windsor Hall Apartments at 3420 Locust, low-rise apartment buildings that were built in 1923-25 and listed in the National Register in 2007 and 2011 respectively.⁴⁶

Patrick J. Morley (1857-1933) was a contract builder in the Kansas City area for more than four decades. Born in Ireland in 1857, Morley immigrated to the United States in 1877 and became a naturalized citizen in 1891.⁴⁷ He was responsible for the construction of many residential and commercial buildings throughout the city area including the Star Theater on 18th Street. Morley worked until his death in 1933.

Conclusion

The Michelson Building was constructed in 1923 in the Midtown sector of Kansas City during a transitional period in the city, architecturally and economically. The 1920s and 1930s are distinguished stylistically by the century's first new style – Art Deco - one that is characterized by decoration through new simplified forms and clean lines. Named for a 1925 Paris Exposition, the modern trend did not immediately sever ties with the revivalist traditions. The new style emerged gradually as architects and designers experimented with these new forms while maintaining the familiar ordering of the Beaux Arts and other revival styles. The Michelson Building reflects the beginning stages of the transition from classical and revival styles to the modern idiom that would forever change the style of American architecture. The Michelson Building has a classically ordered terracotta facade designed with ornament used in a familiar manner at the building's entrance, around windows, on pilasters between the bays, and at horizontally bands at the cornices and parapet. The projecting cornices with dentils, the rusticated pilasters, and parapet that resembles a blind balustrade are features characteristic of Beaux Arts Classicism. It was in the ornament itself that the designer turned to new forms characterized by clean lines and simplified geometric patterns that were used alongside traditional Beaux Arts forms of elaborate flowing swags and shields that distinguish the Michelson facade as transitional.

Predating the official onset of Art Deco style in the late 1920s, the Michelson Building's terracotta facade in near-original condition conveys information about the restrained early designs when architects were first experimenting with modern forms by incorporating them in familiar traditional compositions. This practice is seen on some extant Kansas City commercial buildings and apartment houses of the mid-1920s but the Michelson Building is among the earliest-known, extant buildings reflecting the use of modern geometric forms on commercial buildings in the city. This gradual introduction of simplified and stylized forms created familiarly that fostered the acceptance of the Art Deco style as a modern image. The ultimate shift from the use of classical to modern ornament is seen in the late 1920s terracotta facades of commercial buildings across the city designed and constructed in the ZigZag Moderne phase of the Art Deco style. Built in 1923, the Michelson Building is locally significant as a rare extant example of this transitional period when the shift from traditional revival styles to Art Deco began.

⁴³ Cydney E. Millstein and Maryann Warfield, 8:8.

⁴⁴ Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories*.

⁴⁵ Mary Doeden and Kerry Davis. *Gillham Court Apartments Building National Register Nomination*, Washington, DC: National Parks Service, 2007: 8-11.

⁴⁶ Millstein and Warfield, 8:7

⁴⁷ Ancestry.com. *1930 United States Federal Census*.

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Michelson Building
Name of Property
Jackson County, Missouri
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Michelson Building
Name of Property
Jackson County, Missouri
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Nebraska State Capital Photo. Jeff Hunter, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, downloaded at

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Michelson Building
Name of Property
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Verbal Boundary Description

The Legal Description of the nominated property (the Michelson Building at 3125-33 Troost Avenue) is the W 70 FT OF LOT 3 WITHERS PLACE.

Boundary Justification

The above description reflects the approximate footprint of the building. Although combined in a single legal parcel with the adjacent Shankman Building and the rear lot, neither of which were historically associated with the Michelson Building. The boundary is the footprint of the Michelson Building.

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Figures: Maps, Floor Plans and Historic Views

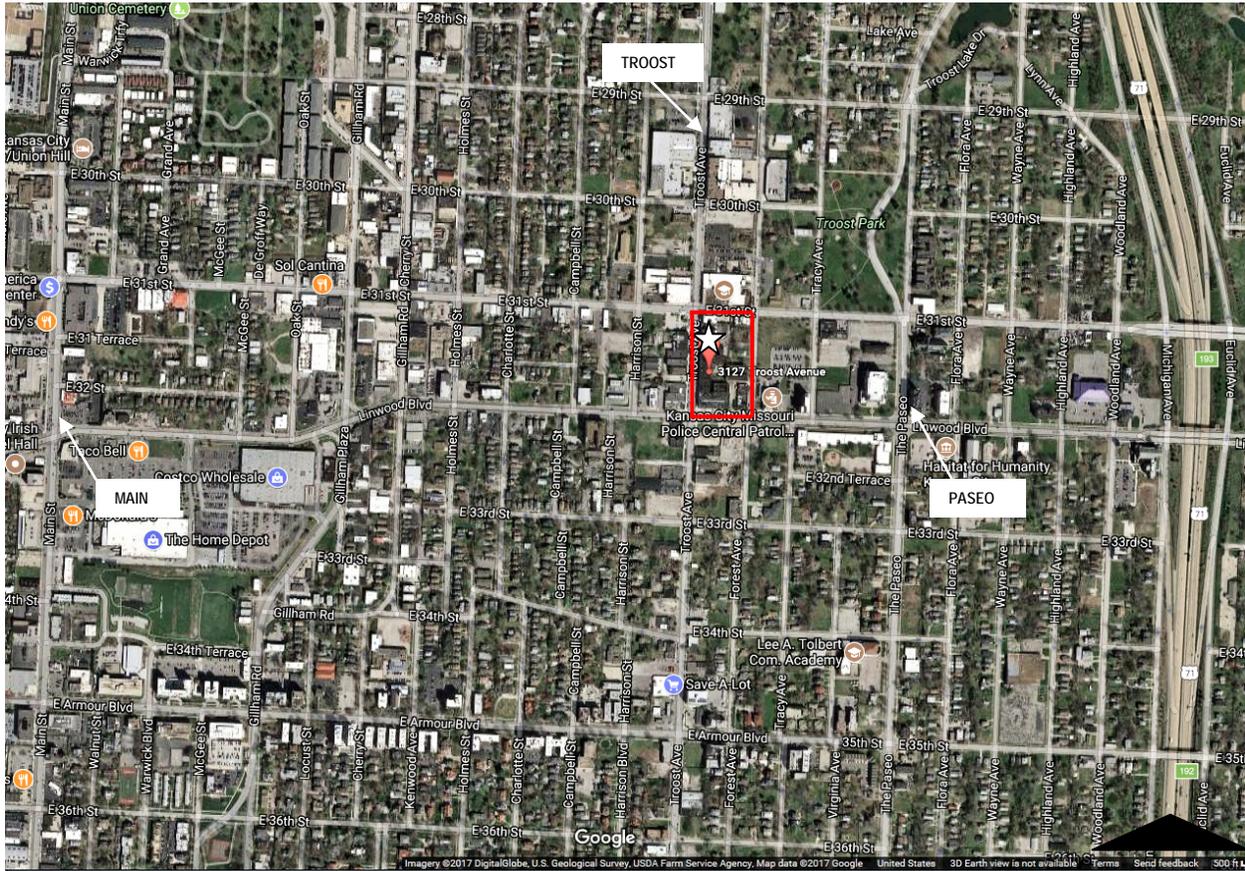


Figure 1: Context Map of Midtown, Kansas City Missouri, Google Maps 2017 – Not to Scale
Michelson Building, 3125 – 3133 Troost Ave., Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri
WGS 84 Longitude: 39.069457 Latitude: -94.571225

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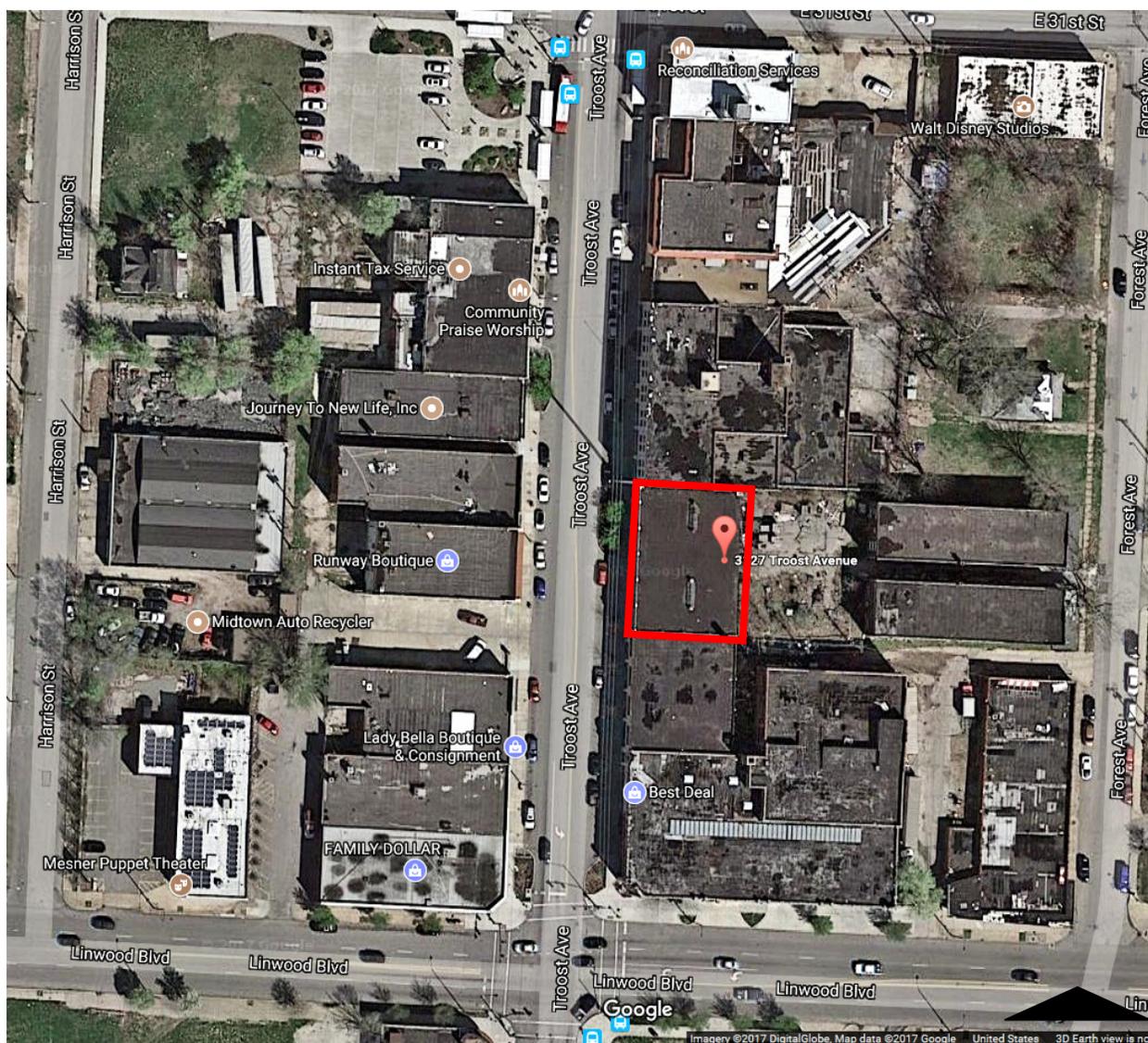


Figure 2: Site Plan, Google Maps 2017 – Not to Scale
Michelson Building, 3125 – 3133 Troost Ave., Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri
WGS 84 Longitude: 39.069457 Latitude: -94.571225

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Section number Figures Page 21

Michelson Building
Name of Property
Jackson County, Missouri
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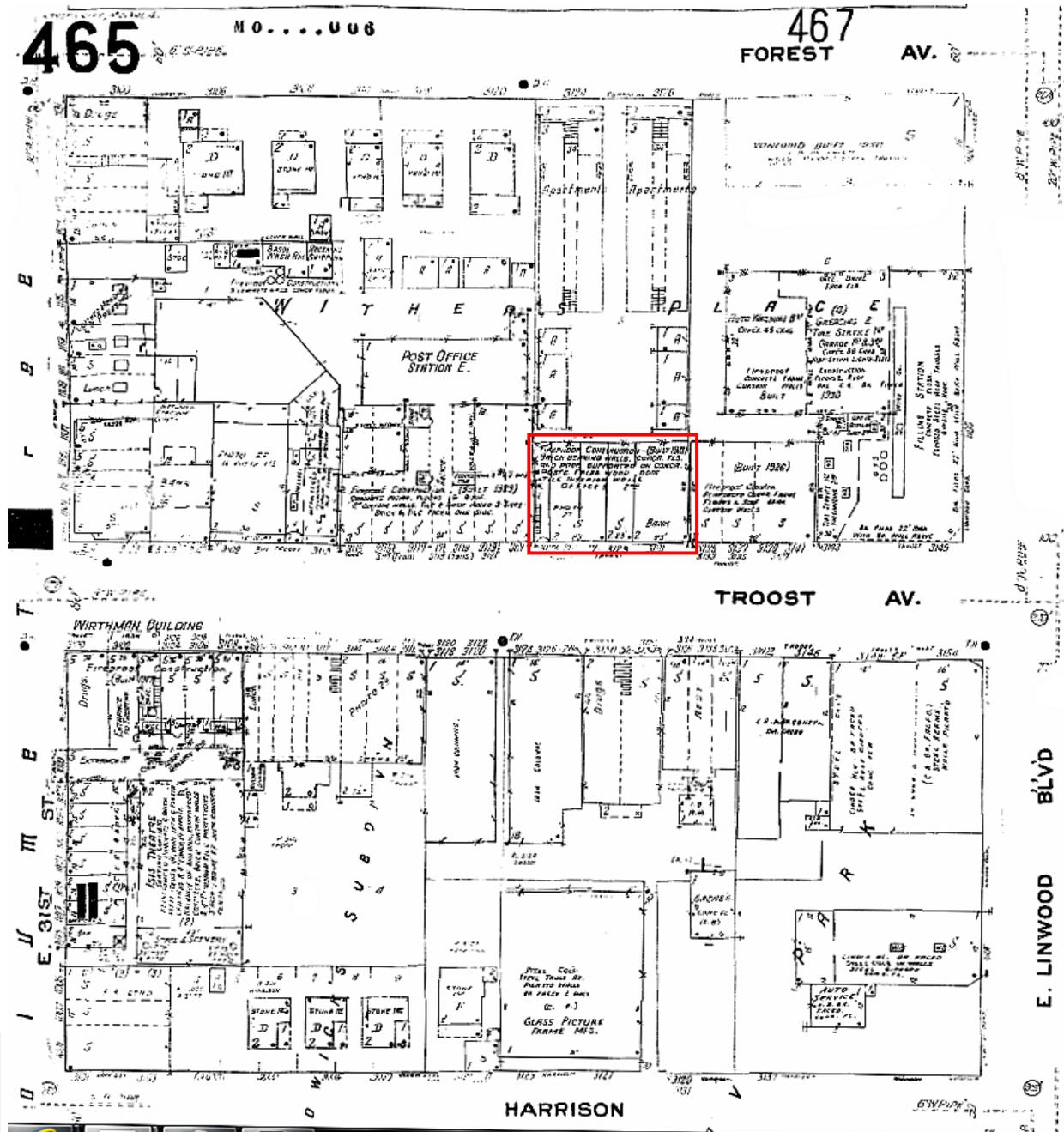


Figure 3: Excerpt from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Sheet 465 showing 3100 block S. Troost, 1909 Vol. 4 with February 1951. Kansas City Public Library <http://www.kclibrary.org/research-resources/research-databases/sanborn-maps-1867-1970> (accessed 8 June 2017).

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Michelson Building
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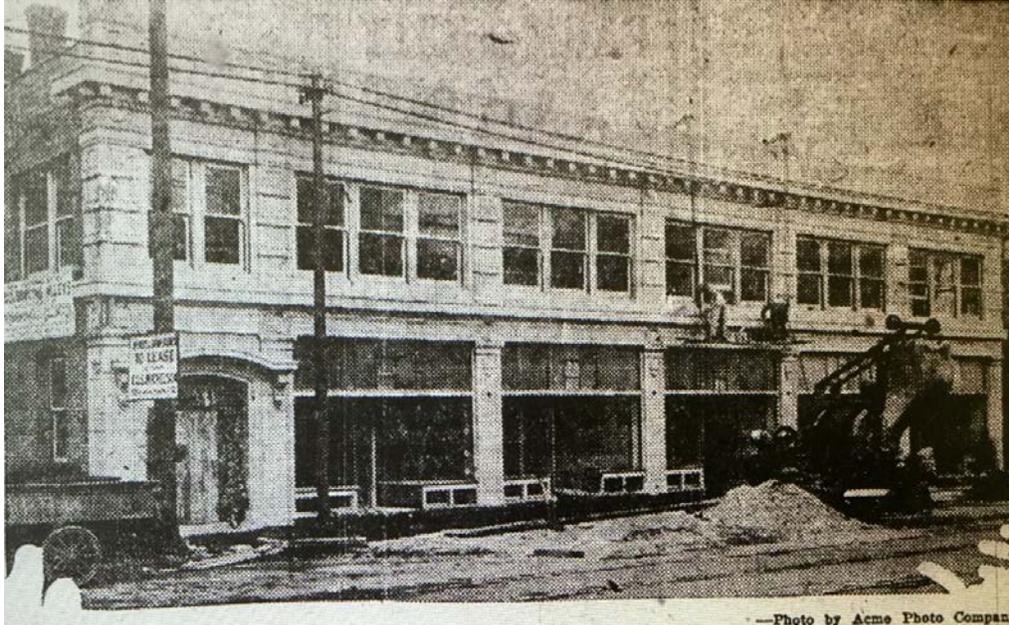


Figure 4 – Photo of Michelson Building under construction, “New Troost Avenue Building.”
Kansas City Journal Post, 11 Mar 1923, 11.



Figure 5: Historic Street View – Troost at Christmas 1929. Looking south at 3100 block with Michelson Building on left with red arrow (Missouri Valley Special Collections Kansas City Public Library, <http://www.kchistory.org/u/?Montgomery,6967> accessed on 30 July 2017.

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Figure 6: Historic Street View - Michelson Building with arrow looking south in 3100 block Troost (1935) – Note lights along storefront on of Michelson Building and “Community State Bank” pedestal sign on sidewalk in front of building (Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Special Collections downloaded at <http://www.kchistory.org/u/?South,4124>).



Figure 7: Historic View of Michelson Building - 1955 view of Troost Avenue - Michelson Building has “Community State Bank” sign. (Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Special Collections downloaded at <http://www.kchistory.org/u/?Montgomery,6962>).

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SITE

MICHELSON BUILDING
3125-3133 Troost, Kansas City, MO
Aerial Photo downloaded at Google.com 2017
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 8 – Photo Key
a) Exterior Views

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Continuation Sheet

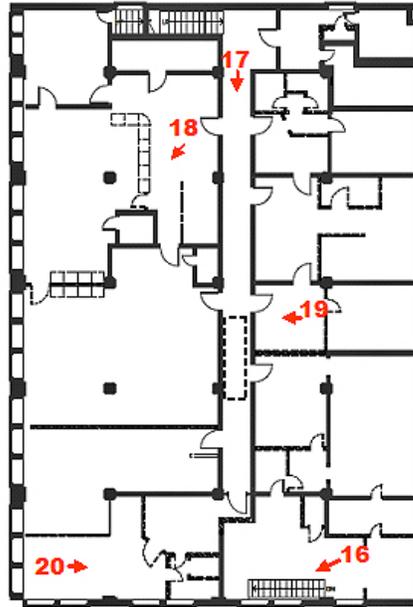
Section number Figures Page 25

Michelson Building

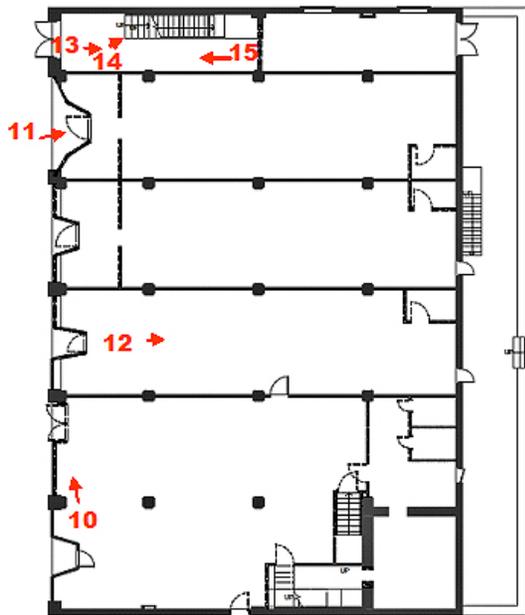
Name of Property
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SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR


MICHELSON BUILDING
3125-3133 Troost, Kansas City, MO
Base Plans are existing floor plans
by Treanor HL Architects
NOT TO SCALE

Figure 8 - Photo Key

b) Current Floor Plans - Key to Interior Photos on first and second floors
Floor Plans by Treanor HL Architects, 2017

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Figure 9 – Masonic Hall, 903 Harrison (Source: “The Bacchus Foundation @ Tiffany Ballroom [Masonic Temple],” Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/bacchusfoundation/photos/pcb.170532560185150/1467661056623075/?type=3&theater> 5 Sept 2017)



Figure 10 – The Meyer Building, 3923 Main (Google Maps 2017)

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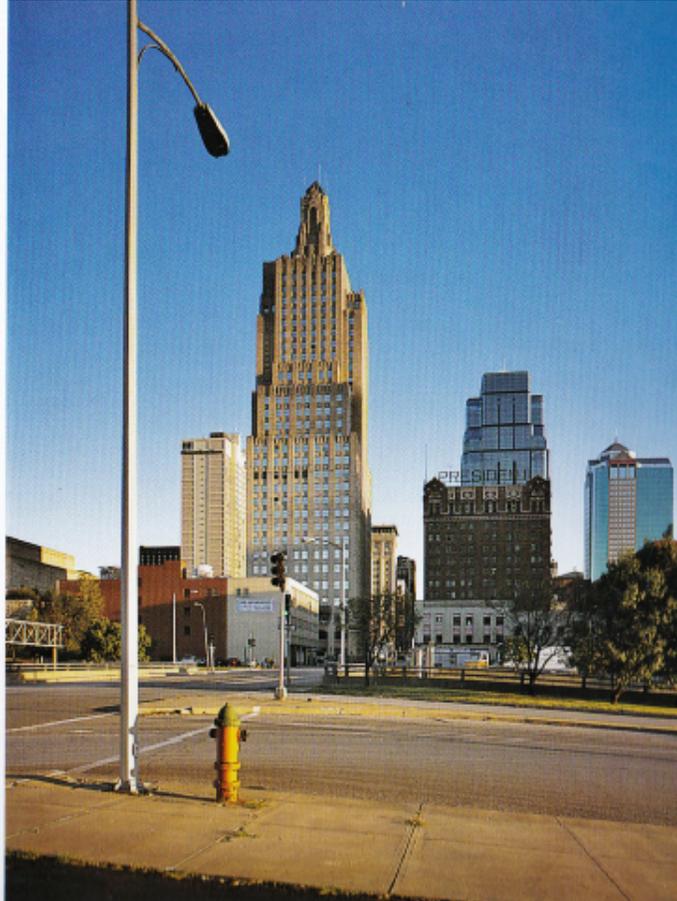


Figure 11 – Kansas City Power and Light Building

(Source: Upper – Carla Breeze, *American Art Deco: Architecture and Regionalism*, p.149;

Lower – Google Maps 2017)

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Figure 12 – General Tire Building (Melanie A Betz, *Art Deco Survey Kansas City Missouri*. Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1989). Digital image provided by the Missouri State Preservation Office.



Figure 13 – Building at 3130 Troost (Photo by B. Spencer, 2017)

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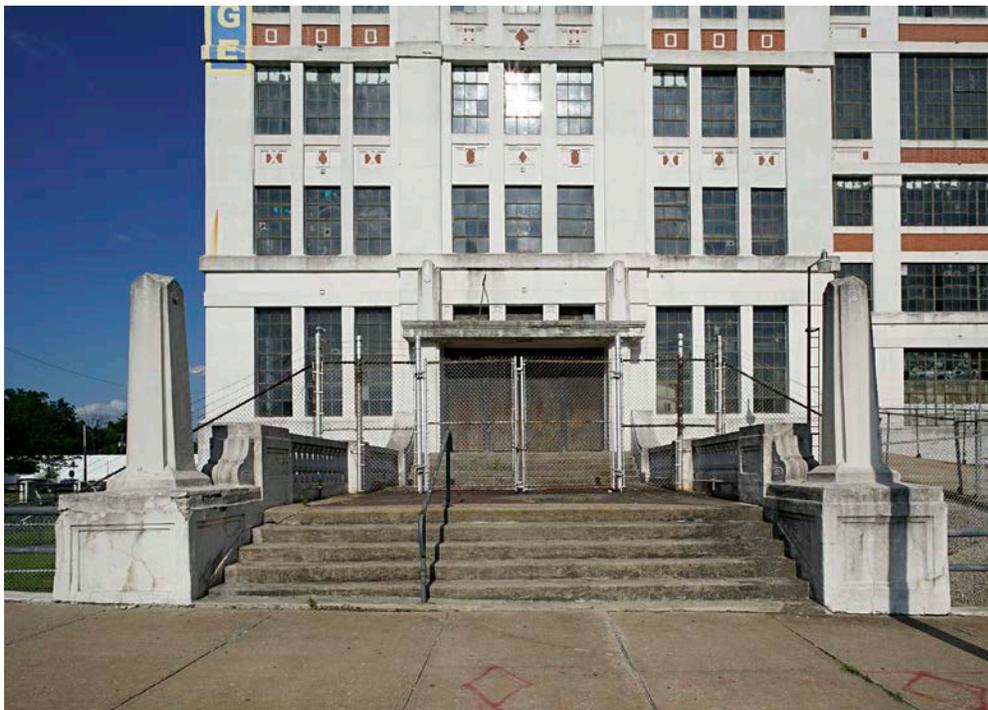


Figure 14 – National Cloak and Suit Company Building at 5429 Independence Avenue
Photos by Richard Welkowsky for the National Cloak & Suit Company draft National Register Nomination prepared by Architectural & Historical Research, LLC, 2017. Digital files provided by the Missouri State Preservation Office.

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Figure 15 Above - Whitehall Apartments at 361 Emmanuel Clever Boulevard (Google Maps 2017)



Figure 16 Center and Right – Clyde Manor Apartment Building at 330-350 E. Armour Boulevard (Photo Source: Mac Properties website accessed 5 Sept 2017 at <https://www.macapartments.com/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=00Pi000000D3GykEAF>)



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*Figure 17 – Olds Oakland Motor Company Building,
1512-1518 Grand Avenue
(Google Maps 2017)*

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Figure 18 – Automobile Merchandising Corporation of America, 1524 Grand Avenue (Google Maps 2017)

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Figure 19 - Carnie-Goudie Manufacturing Company, 514 W. 26th
(Google Maps 2017)

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Figure 20 – Illustration of the Nebraska State Capitol designed in the 1920s by Bertram Goodhue is credited as one of the first prominent public buildings to combine classical traditions with modern simplicity. Photo Source: Jeff Hunter, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, downloaded at <http://capitol.nebraska.gov/index.php/news/multimedia/snowless-capitol-in-december-11-28-2017>

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Figure 21 – ZigZag Modern Buildings

*The Shankman Building at 3115-3123 Troost and the Greystone Apartments formerly at 3017-27 Troost (lower) are excellent representative example of the early phase of Art Deco – the ZigZag Moderne Phase distinguished by ornate detailing. (Melanie A Betz, *Art Deco Survey Kansas City Missouri*. Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1989). The digital image of photograph provided by the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office.*

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Figure 22 – Representative Examples of the second period of Art Deco – the Streamline/Art Moderne Phase - is the Morris Bodker Grocery built in 1932 (upper) and the Administration Building of the Cleveland Chiropractic College built in 1948 (lower). Melanie A Betz, Art Deco Survey Kansas City Missouri. Kansas City Landmarks Commission, 1989.

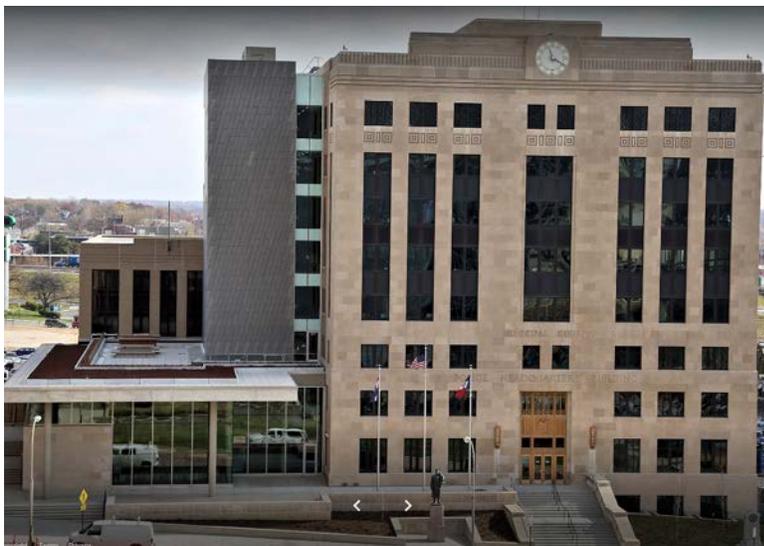


Figure 23 – Representative example of the third period of Art Deco – the PWA Modern Phase is the Kansas City Municipal Courts and Police Headquarters Building built in 1938 (with 2014 addition on left). Source: City of Kansas City MO website: kcmo.gov downloaded 11/27/2017

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The design of the Michelson Facade is an early example of architect's experimenting with the new modern idiom in contrast to the elaborate Classical detailing of the preceding decades. In addition to the modern detailing generally takes the place of geometric forms on the Michelson Building but the facade also incorporates simplified and stylized Classical motifs. resulting in an overall design that is more simplified than the traditional Beaux Arts facade.

Geometric detailing on the Michelson Building which illustrates the transition from the Beaux Arts to early Art Deco styles includes the following features noted on the adjacent photos:

1. 1st Floor piers incorporating clean and simple lines with geometric drop pendants at the cap.
2. 2nd floor piers incorporating projecting horizontal bands that feature raised diamond panels in a framed rectangular band
3. Stylized tulip motif used in the lower cornice band, and
4. Parapet that resembles a blind balustrade typical of the Beaux Arts style but utilizes modern geometric forms and stylized tulip motifs, the latter similar to the lower cornice.

Figure 24 – Diagram of Michelson Building Facade illustrating modern detailing that classifies this design as transitional – reflecting a transition between classical Beaux Arts of the preceding decades and the early phase of Art Deco that would emerge by the end of the 1920s. (B. Spencer, 2017)





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RESTAURANTS

100
LAW





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MOTEL UNIT
FURNACE

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3165







MICHELSON

MICHELSON

TELEVIS
REPLA
ECLIN

























CITY OF FOUNTAINS
HEART OF THE NATION



KANSAS CITY
MISSOURI

**City Planning and Development Department
Citywide Planning Division
Historic Preservation Office**

16th Floor, City Hall
414 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106-2795
kchp@kcmo.org

(816) 513-2902
Fax (816) 513-2899

October 30, 2017

Toni M. Prawl
Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer and
Director, Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176

Re: **National Register Nomination** for the *Michelson Building*

Dear Dr. Prawl:

As a Historic Preservation Planner for the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Kansas City, Missouri, a Certified Local Government, I am pleased to inform you that the Commission has reviewed the nomination to the **National Register of Historic Places** for the *Michelson Building* located at 3123-3131 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri. At the October 27, 2017 hearing of the nomination, the Historic Preservation Commission made a motion to recommend **approval** of the nomination of the *Michelson Building*.

The Commission also recommended that the *Michelson Building* would be eligible under Criterion A for COMMERCE due to its significance as part of the commercial district at 31st Street & Troost Avenue.

A public notice was printed in the *Daily Record* on October 12, 2017. The City Historic Preservation Office received no letters or calls in opposition to the nomination. Preservation staff recommended approval of the nomination. If you have any questions, please call me at 816-513-2901.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bradley Wolf".

Bradley Wolf
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Mayor Sly James

Troy Schulte, City Manager
Jeffery Williams, AICP Director of the City Development Department
Brenda Spencer, Spencer Preservation, Nomination Preparer



Missouri Department of

dnr.mo.gov

NATURAL RESOURCES

Eric R. Greitens, Governor

Carol S. Comer, Director

Memorandum

Date: December 1, 2017

To: J. Paul Loether, National Register of Historic Places

From: Mike Sutherland, Deputy SHPO

Subject: Michelson Building, 3125-3133 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Jackson County, MO,
National Register Nomination

Our state review board, the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, approved the above nomination on **November 3, 2017**. All owners and appropriate elected public officials were notified and provided at least thirty (30) days to comment on the above proposed nomination in accordance with Section 36CFR60.6, interim regulations, using the exact notification format recommended by the National Register. **The enclosed disc contains the true and correct copy of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.**

Please find enclosed the following documentation:

 1 CD with original National Register of Historic Places registration form and CLG letter

 Multiple Property Documentation Form

 Photographs

 1 CD with electronic images

 Original USGS map(s)

 2 Piece(s) of correspondence (cover letter and signature page)

 Other: _____

Comments:

 Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed

 The enclosed owner objection(s) do do not constitute a majority of property owners.

 Other: _____



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