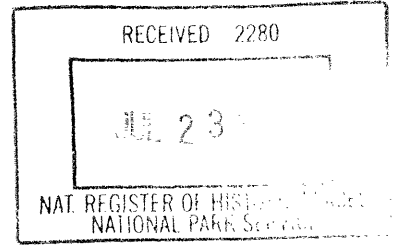


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name F.W. Woolworth Building

other names/site number FA-LDT-96

2. Location

street & number 106 Main Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Lexington vicinity N/A  
state Kentucky code KY county Fayette code 067 zip code 40507

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally     statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

David L. Morgan 6-18-02  
Signature of certifying official David L. Morgan, SHPO Date

    Kentucky Heritage Council/ State Historic Preservation Office      
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

    Signature of commenting or other official     Date

    State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
✓ entered in the National Register Edson H. Beall  
    See continuation sheet.  
    determined eligible for the National Register      
    See continuation sheet.  
    determined not eligible for the National Register      
    removed from the National Register      
    other (explain):    

    9/6/02  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public local	<input type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> buildings
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0    
Name of related multiple property listing N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: department store

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Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Work-in-progress Sub: commerce/business

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**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Streamlined Moderne, Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
roof ASPHALT  
walls BRICK  
other TERRA COTTA

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Narrative Description (See continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Criteria Considerations

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance	<u>Commerce</u>
Period of Significance	<u>1948-1952</u>
Significant Dates	<u>1948</u>
Significant Person	<u>N/A</u>
Cultural Affiliation	<u>N/A</u>
Architect/Builder	<u>Garber, Frederick (architect)</u>

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References** (See continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: The Kentucky Heritage Council

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Lexington	West	Quad
1	<u>16</u>	<u>719230</u>	<u>4213780</u>	3	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
2	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	4	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>

Verbal Boundary Description (See continuation sheets.)

Boundary Justification (See continuation sheets.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cynthia Johnson  
organization Private Consultant date April 1, 2002  
street & number 51 Mentelle Park, #4 telephone (859) 268-3199  
city or town Lexington state KY zip code 40502

**Property Owner**

name Joe Rosenberg  
street & number 126 S. Upper St. telephone (859) 255-6877  
city or town Lexington state KY zip code 40507

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F.W. Woolworth Building  
Fayette County, KY

**General Description**

The F.W. Woolworth building (FA-LDT-96) is a three story commercial structure located one building west of the intersection of Limestone and Main Street in the Lexington central business district. From the time of its construction in 1947-1948 until it closed in 1990, this building served as the F.W. Woolworth Five-and-Dime Variety Store. This structure is a hybrid design of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne style. The exterior of the building remains largely intact. There has been some damage to the main facade's glazed terra cotta tiles as well as the loss of the awning and some of the plate glass in the storefront windows. The interior of the building has suffered extensive water damage, leading to a considerable loss of the plaster ceilings and walls. The spatial arrangements of the interior, however, remain in their original configuration. Only a minor remodeling to the lunch counter in 1971 was undertaken, leaving the rest of the building virtually unchanged. The building has approximately 48,000 square feet which includes a basement. The footprint of the building is a rectangular open plan with a wing off of the east wall which serves as a secondary entrance on Limestone Street. The dimensions of the main portion of the building are approximately 75 feet by 207 feet with the dimensions of the wing measuring nearly square at 33.6 feet by 33 feet. The entire structure was constructed in a single building campaign. The primary structure is built on a concrete foundation with masonry bearing walls on the exterior and interior steel columns and concrete floors. The building has a full basement, first- and second-floor with the third floor only occupying one third of the total floor area. Access to the flat, built-up asphalt roof is gained from the third floor; and that roof is surrounded by a parapet wall.

**North (Main Street) Facade**

The primary facade is oriented to Main Street facing north. The first and second stories are clearly articulated on this facade. The third story is set back behind the parapet wall and only visible as a rectangular form in yellow brick. The first floor is characterized by the four projecting closed storefront display windows and three double door recessed entrances which alternate between the display windows. Each of the entrances has inlaid terrazzo tiles that include a tile "W," depicting the corporate logo. Only the central entrance retains the original wooden doors and wood door frame with curved chrome handles. The other doors have been replaced with aluminum framed doors. The wood framed transom windows above the

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entrance doors, however, remain intact for all three entrances. The storefront area is defined by low, black granite bulkheads punctuated with decorative metal grilles. The plate glass windows are held in place with extruded aluminum frames, allowing for the maximum use of the window area. The closed storefront window areas have terrazzo tiles that provide a platform for the merchandise. The back of the display area is defined with stepped back plaster walls and a horizontal band that unifies all four of the independent storefront windows. A large red horizontal masthead extends across the entire facade to visually separate the first and second stories. The masthead is curved at both ends and echoes the horizontal speed band favored in Streamline Moderne design.

The lettering for the masthead is no longer in place as is the case with the awning which was originally situated below the masthead. The second story is faced in a skin of glazed white terra cotta tiles that are square. There are nine metal casement windows that accordion outward when open across the second level. These windows are slightly recessed from the main plane of the facade. Each window is separated with decorative glazed terra cotta tiles that create vertical striations. Underneath the granite window sills are more decorative tiles of the same vertical design. A metal transom window is above each of the casement windows. The second story is capped with a stepped parapet wall which is clad in the same glazed tiles,

**East Facade**

The east facade faces Limestone Street and served as a secondary entrance and storefront. The facade is two stories in height and is constructed of yellow brick. There is a recessed entrance that retains the original double wooden doors and transom windows. The entry is sheathed in terrazzo tile that has the characteristic red "W." embedded in the design. There is one display window that is a closed storefront and mirrors the appearance of the ones on the main facade. The balance of the first story is characterized by a decorative brick panel. The black granite bulkhead extends across the base of the first story and is punctuated by three of the decorative metal grilles. The awning and masthead for this facade are no longer intact. A glazed white terra cotta belt course visually separates the first and second floors. The second story uses common bond along with decorative masonry work to emphasize the Art Deco aesthetic of the upper facade. This area of the facade utilizes step backs of the masonry to create a low relief for ornamentation. There are three metal casement windows with metal

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frames and transom windows above them. The masonry is capped at the roof line with the white glazed terra cotta tiles that serve as a coping course.

**South Facade**

The rear facade faces south on to Vine Street (formerly Water Street) and serves as the delivery area and employee entrance. The reddish-brown masonry wall is constructed in common bond and has window openings for the first and second floors. Each of the window bays is emphasized with vertical masonry bands which imply a connection to the north and east facades. A glazed tile terra cotta belt course reaches across the width of the facade located just below the clerestory windows of the first floor. The windows are steel-framed on both the first and second story. The employee entrance door and the freight elevator are located on the southwestern corner of the this elevation. A stair tower and elevator shaft extend to the third story. The roof line is topped with a glazed white terra cotta coping course.

**West Facade**

The west facade serves as a party wall. Another building had once been adjacent to this elevation but has since been demolished. The ghost of this structure remains on the northwest corner of the Woolworth building. The concrete foundation is visible on the south western end of the facade. There are no windows or doors along this facade and there is no ornamentation. The reddish-brown brick wall is constructed in common bond and is capped with plain terra cotta coping. The one feature articulated along this elevation is the vertical shaft for the interior dumbwaiter that extends from the first to third floor.

**Interior**

The interior of the building is characterized by the cavernous first floor sales area. Only a single row of structural columns visually interrupt the flow of the open plan. The base of the columns are sheathed in wood wainscoting. Along the walls, many of the wooden display cases are still intact. Above the display cases, the plaster walls rise to the 14' dropped ceiling. The plaster has some vertical and horizontal articulations giving the walls a finished appearance. Some areas of the plaster walls have been lost due to water damage as has most of the plaster ceiling. The fluorescent lights are still

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Fayette County, KY

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hanging from the ceiling in some areas. The lunch counter has been removed but some of the shelving along the west wall remains.

Staircase to the upper floors are hidden from view and are of simple steel construction. One staircase is located in the northwestern corner of the building behind one of the closed storefront display cases. This staircase connects to the row of offices directly above the storefront area. The other staircase is situated in the southwestern corner of the building and connects to the employee entrance on the rear facade. The second floor is largely open space with structural columns. This area was used for inventory storage, employee lockers and a cloak room for customers. An employee lounge was also located on this level possibly in the Limestone Street wing. The floor area is devoid of any finish materials only having a concrete floor and glazed brick walls. The mechanical systems are exposed and originally ran under the plaster ceiling. Most of the ceiling has been demolished. The offices that run across the north wall are in varying states of deterioration. The plaster finish and detailing remains on some walls and ceilings.

The third floor is a narrow space that runs from the north elevation to the south elevation along the western third of the building. This space was used as the kitchen facilities for the lunch counter. A dumbwaiter was used to convey food from the third to the first floor. Mechanical systems were also housed in two of the rooms on the third floor. The walls are glazed brick and a row of glass block windows on the east wall illuminate the spaces. Access to the flat roof is also gained from the third floor.

The basement is currently filled with standing water, so no inspection of this area was made.



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**Statement of Significance**

The F.W. Woolworth building (FA-LDT-96) at 106 West Main St., meets the National Register of Historic Places Criterion A, and is locally significant in the area of commerce within the historic context: "Rise of Woolworth's Five and Dime Store as a National Retail Chain Store, 1879-1997." The building represents an era in retail history that served wide segments of the population in ways that differed from traditional department stores. The merchandising techniques developed by F.W. Woolworth revolutionized the shopping experience on Main Street and influenced twentieth century retailing by becoming the first discount chain store selling a variety of notions. The period of significance for this property begins with its construction in 1948 and continues until 1952, the close of the 50-year period.

**Rise of Woolworth's Five and Dime Store as a National Retail Chain Store, 1879-1997**

F.W. Woolworth started his first successful variety store in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1879. His idea was to sell items for five cents apiece with the philosophy that high sales volume matched with low profit margins still would turn a profit. He also revolutionized the way that retail stores operated. He expanded upon the general store concept by allowing the customers the ability to pick up items without having to ask for assistance from a salesperson (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:47). The success of the variety store rested on the fact that for the first time, a wide array of goods at inexpensive prices were made available to people of modest economic levels (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:5). Woolworth's sold everyday household and personal items at bargain prices (Wilkerson, 2000:1). The basic marketing foundation was to sell a volume of low-priced items themselves which generated a small profit on each sale. The goods could be bought in bulk by manufacturers to reduce costs. Eventually, Woolworth added ten cent items to the inventory since he could only sell a limited amount of goods for five cents (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:51). This set into motion the birth of the five-and-dime empire that would have reverberations on retail shopping patterns in the twentieth century.

The Woolworth variety store became one of the first chain stores in America. The power of the chain was fed by the ability to buy goods from manufacturers at bulk prices which enabled the chain store to sell items at lower prices than the local merchants

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(Wilkerson, 2000:1). The new chains were benefiting from improvements in manufacturing and railroad transportation that resulted from the Industrial Revolution. The increasing population of immigrants provided an instant customer base for dime stores since these were people who tended to be at the lower end of the economic scale. The westward migration of the population opened up attractive new markets for the chains. Woolworth's began expanding into these new markets from mid-1886 to 1905 (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:60).

The success of Woolworth's marketing strategy was to target people of modest means. The "Everybody's Store" was a part of the company's logo. "Everybody" included large segments of the population that had been ignored by other retailers but who also had pent up consumer demand (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:4-5). Woolworth's and other dime stores were affordable to these people so that they too, could indulge their materialist desires. People could buy items that might have been previously inaccessible to them otherwise even though the products might not be the finest quality (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:4-5). Woolworth's clearly understood that children were an untapped market source (Huxtable, 1986). Woolworth's cleverly filled display cases full of candy and toys. Children could afford to buy trinkets and treats because they were so inexpensive. The five-and-dime also propagated a vast amount of material goods to adults—costume jewelry, house wares, clothes, make-up, perfume, tools and notions occupied Woolworth's sales floors (F.W. Woolworth's Co., 1939:16-43). Woolworth's also cashed in on seasonal items for holidays and parties which was a new concept in merchandising. All of the "nickels and dimes" spent added up to large corporate profits while fueling a healthy consumer culture and filling the world with copious amounts of dime store material culture.

Main Street locations for the stores were a Woolworth policy. Downtown was the traditional retail center of any town at this time. It made logical sense from a marketing standpoint to be situated in the focus of commercial activity. Competition for Woolworth's in the dime store arena began as soon as the economic success of the chain was evident. Several dime store chains emerged to ride the coattails of Woolworth's stores. Kress, Kresge and McCory's, as well as many others, adopted the five- and-dime concept even down to the red front masthead (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:73).

Dime stores continued to prosper into the 1930s despite the Great Depression. Woolworth's actually benefited from the Depression

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because the goods the chain sold were so inexpensive. This success allowed the company to generate profits and expand at a time when other retailers were struggling with sales. Woolworth's had over two thousand stores by 1939 which represented the addition of approximately 500 new store locations since 1929 (F.W. Woolworth Co. 1939:8). It was during the Depression, that Woolworth's changed its fixed price policy that had kept items at five and ten cents. In 1935, the Board of Directors officially ended its limited price policy (F.W. Woolworth Co., 1954:28-29). The corporate decision to lift the price limits increased the profits of the company, which allowed for a further expansion of the chain, as well as an expansion of the range of goods which could be sold.

Consequently, this change had repercussions throughout the chain, as the corporation began to abandon its original concept of locating in existing storefronts and started investing in new buildings. "Woolworth Moderne," as Ada Louise Huxtable refers to it, was the result of a culmination of factors. During the Depression, the "Modernize Main Street" movement was fomented to encourage customers to shop. The idea was to update the image of storefronts by using modern styles and materials. This was, in large part, fueled by manufacturers of construction materials who were promoting their own products like aluminized brick, Vitrolite and terra-cotta (Wirz and Striner, 1984: 71).

The architectural expression that was chosen to communicate the "modern" message was Art Deco, and more specifically its derivative, Streamline Moderne. The Deco aesthetic was meant to be a new form of architecture that abstracted historical references and ornament in modern materials (Gebhard, 1996:14). The public premiere of Art Deco occurred at the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Though architecture in the Art Deco language was not featured at the exposition, the style was quickly adapted to buildings. Deco used verticality and geometric forms to express a modern look and was used throughout the 1920's (Gebhard, 1996:14). The second incarnation of the Deco aesthetic took the form of Streamline Moderne in the 1930's. It is characterized by a smooth, curved, machine-like appearance that came from the scientific obsession of making objects more efficient (Gebhard, 1996:9-11). Streamline Moderne evoked a sense of motion that was amplified in planes, cars and trains. Streamlining began to seep into many aspects of material culture as the industrial designers were brought in to revamp almost everything that could be sold to the consumer (Liebs, 55:1985). Placed in the context of the Depression,

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Streamline Moderne evoked a sense of progress and a renewed faith in the future as well as reinvigorating interest in consumption.

Woolworth's, like many commercial businesses, readily incorporated the modern style of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne into their store designs. The intent was to draw customers into stores through the use of this progressive imagery. Dime stores, in particular, wanted to project shopping efficiency because a customer could satisfy all of their needs under one roof. Streamline Moderne underscored the expression of efficiency and reinforced the notion that Woolworth's was a modern, up-to-date retailer. Woolworth would continue to hold on to this design motif into the 1950s even after Streamline Moderne went out of vogue (Huxtable, 1986:312).

The Woolworth variety store chain's most successful period of retail business was from the 1930s to the 1960s which coincided with their largest expansion of store plants. By the 1970s and 1980s, the Woolworth corporation began to enter the discount store arena that had been defined by S.S. Kresge's shift to K-Mart stores. The Woolco division of Woolworth began in 1962 and represented a major transition from its dime store image. Woolworth's also delved into specialty store ownership departing from the variety store concept. This further diversification diluted the five-and-dime roots of the corporation (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:4-5). By the 1990s, the corporation recognized that the dime store concept was no longer viable and began closing store locations. The corporation recognized that the shopping habits of Americans were changing since people could buy the same products sold at Woolworth's in suburban discount superstores such as Wal-Mart, which had ample parking lots (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:8-9). Downtown locations became less desirable to shoppers because they had become accustomed to the convenience of the suburban retail stores. (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:9). The lack of big ticket items available in the dime stores also contributed to the loss of sales. In 1997, the company made the decision to close all of its Woolworth locations and focus on its specialty store holdings. This decision ended an era of retailing that had shaped consumption patterns for the first half of the twentieth century.

#### **F.W. Woolworth Building in the Local Context**

The F.W. Woolworth building is located in Lexington, Kentucky which is located in the center of Fayette county. Lexington is in the heart of the inner-Bluegrass region and serves as a commercial hub for the smaller towns that surround it. By the early twentieth century, Lexington's Main Street was well established as the

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retail center for the city as well as for the entire region. Lexington's first Woolworth's opened in 1902 at 268 West Main Street. The Lexington store, #152, was located in an existing commercial structure. This was part of the corporate strategy in this early phase of expansion. In 1912 S.S. Kresge opened a store just two doors down from the Woolworth red front. These two stores co-existed with each other, bringing the dime store giants to Lexington. By the early 1940s, according to city directories, Lexington's central business district had eight department stores, two dime stores and numerous specialty shops.

To stimulate consumer interest during the Depression years, Lexington stores began modernizing their Main Street facades. Montgomery Wards and Sears revamped their stores in 1933 and 1934, respectively (House and Carter, 1998:44, 46). Soon other stores were remodeling their storefronts with Art Deco and Streamline Moderne characteristics. World War II interrupted construction and remodeling activity, but it soon resumed after the war. The SS Kresge tore down its old store and rebuilt a new "modern" store in 1947. Woolworth's followed in the modernization campaign by constructing a new location at 106 W. Main Street in 1948. The Wolf Wile's department store updated its image in 1949 but departed from the Deco aesthetic and instead chose to use the burgeoning International Style (Lucas, 1996:8-3).

Woolworth's employed Cincinnati architect Frederick W. Garber to design the new store (Tate, 1987:H-1). Mr. Garber was a well-known architect in Cincinnati, having designed several downtown Cincinnati buildings including: the Union Central Building, the Central Trust Building, the Dixie Terminal Building and Cincinnati Gas and Electric (Cincinnati Enquirer, 1950). Whether he chose to design the Woolworth Building in an Art Deco, Streamline Moderne hybrid or if Woolworth's directed the design is not known. The inclination is to credit Woolworth's with the choice of the design since it was constructing other stores in this design motif. Compared to other Woolworth stores across the country, Lexington's new store shared many similarities with its fellow red fronts: terra cotta panels of a yellowish white color were used to clad the facade; large display windows cover the majority of the storefront level with only metal mullions encasing the glazing; and the building rose to a two-to-three story height.

This new store was opened on September 9, 1948. The facility was twice the size of the original location. It also offered such modern amenities as air conditioning and fluorescent lighting (Lexington Herald, 1948:5). Woolworth's proudly announced the arrival of the new store with advertisements in the local newspaper.

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F.W. Woolworth Building  
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``Lexington's Bigger, Better Woolworth store opens today.''

``After a year of planning and building, Woolworth proudly opens its doors on a spick-and-span, bright-as-a-button new Woolworth's. We're now twice as big! Sparkling and modern, our new and larger departments display a more varied assortment of merchandise than ever!''

By expanding the size of the store, new departments including baked goods, infants' wear, phonograph records and lamps were added to the sales floor. The first floor sales area is a completely open space except for the grid-like arrangement of the structural columns. This kept the merchandise area flexible, so that displays could be rearranged when necessary. Additionally, the lunch counter was extended almost the entire length of the west wall of the first floor, which doubled the size of the one in the original location. Store offices took the second floor, and aligned themselves to the windows overlooking Main Street. A cloak room was on the second level so that customers could unburden themselves of their coats. The rest of the second floor was given over to employee lockers, lounges and inventory storage. The narrow third story contained the kitchen facilities that served the first floor lunch counter via a dumb waiter.

By the time that Woolworth's made its second debut on Lexington's Main Street, the business had become an integral part of the community. Lexington's downtown, like most Main Street shopping districts across the country, was the well established center of community social life. Display windows were an integral part of the window shopping ritual. Woolworth's display windows were typically filled to the brim with merchandise available inside the store. The ever changing displays animated the pedestrian experience with a veritable cornucopia of consumer goods (Thomas, 1993:65). Dime store windows provided a marked departure from the austere storefronts of the upscale department stores like the Wolf Wiles department store (Thomas, 1993:65). Woolworth's also provided a community focal point at the lunch counter. People chose Woolworth's as a local dining spot because it provided reasonably priced meals for customers. (Plunkett-Powell, 1999:145).

Woolworth's thrived in 1950s Lexington. Its slow demise began with the town's suburban development. The post-World War II boom was creating new automobile-oriented suburbs. Along with these new housing developments, the commercial strip center emerged as a

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retail outpost. The convenience of driving the car to the nearby strip far out-weighed the appeal of motoring downtown to fight traffic and struggle to find a parking spot close to the store. Woolworth's sought to meet the new consumer need by locating stores in strip malls. Lexington boasted three Woolworth's by 1960—one downtown and one in the Southland Shopping district, and one in the newly christened Eastland Shopping center (Herald-Leader, 1987:D-1). The downtown location suffered, as did other Main Street retailers. The attraction of the malls drained customers out of the downtown shopping district, starting with the opening of Turfland Mall in 1965. Nationally, malls were becoming successful because they provided a variety of stores, including large department stores in one convenient location with plenty of parking (Clauson, 1984: 144). Retailers moved from downtown locations to the malls in order to stay in business. The S.S. Kresge store was closed and torn down in 1967. By the 1970s, the character of downtown had completely changed from a retail focus that was brimming with department stores, variety stores and specialty shops, to a nine-to-five business orientation. The result was a radical change in the scale and function of downtown that was neither oriented to the pedestrian or the shopper. Still, Woolworth's clung to retail life in downtown Lexington buoyed by low lease payments (Herald-Leader, 1989: A-1). Woolworth's, despite declining sales, managed to hang on and serve downtown residents especially those without cars. Eventually downtown Lexington's decline as a shopping district led to the demise of Lexington's downtown Woolworth store when it closed on January 13, 1990. The loss of the store meant that downtown Lexington was without a dime store for the first time in 88 years.

The F.W. Woolworth building represents an era of retailing that played a significant role in local, social, economic and cultural history. Ironically, the modern day retailers like Wal-Mart that contributed to Woolworth's demise, greatly benefited from F.W. Woolworth's merchandising techniques. The stores of today are largely influenced by the dime store -- large open sales floors with a variety of goods displayed for the customer to examine and buy at reasonable prices. The dime store, however, has faded into the past with the only physical remnants left in the buildings that once housed them. Lexington has only one remaining red front vestige, the F.W. Woolworth's building at 106 W. Main Street.

#### **Integrity Considerations**

Despite its deteriorated appearance, the Woolworth building still retains much of its historic integrity from the period of significance, 1948-1952. This is in large part due to the fact

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that building experienced few alterations over time. The main loss of historic fabric has been in the last twelve years, in which the building has not been maintained. The building, however, still conveys its significance as an historic resource associated with variety stores in Lexington largely because of its integrity.

The integrity of **location** is maintained since the building has not been moved. The **setting** has changed to some degree due to the demolition of some buildings and the construction of new buildings. The relationship, however, of the Woolworth building to the central business district on Main Street is still intact. It is understood that this is the downtown center of Lexington just as it was in 1948 even though the function of the downtown area has changed. The building still reads as a resource that served a retail function on Main Street. The buildings located on the same block of the Woolworth building are still from the early and mid-twentieth century and retain a similar scale as the Woolworth building.

The Woolworth building's **design** has been retained. The building has its original facades and massing. There have been no additions to the structure which might have changed the scale or orientation of the building. The function of the building is still clearly expressed through the closed storefront display windows. The interior spatial relationships also remain intact especially with the first floor open sales area. The lunch counter has been removed, but many of the wooden display cases along the wall remain which conveys a sense of the retail space. The architectural style of the property has also not been altered and represents one of the only art deco/streamline moderne buildings in Lexington. The building conveys a sense of what was intended to be a modern, up-to-date facility in a mid-twentieth century retail district. The building's **materials** have suffered some losses but a large amount of them are still readable. The primary loss is to the plaster finish on the walls and ceilings due to water damage. Some portions of the building, though, still retain large sections of the plaster and its detailing. The windows and most of the doors are still original as is the terrazzo flooring. The durable glazed brick on the interior walls of the second and third floors is still very much intact. The exterior materials have had some deterioration especially the glazed terra cotta tiles on the primary facade. The materials on the other facades, however, remain largely in place.

The integrity of **feeling** and **association** of the Woolworth building is still intact. Since the building looks much as it did when it opened in 1948, the feeling that this structure was one of the



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retail outlets along Main Street is still evident. The association with the F.W. Woolworth variety store chain is readily conveyed through its distinctive design, form and materials as well as the community memory of the once popular dime store.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the F.W. Woolworth Building are indicated on the accompanying sketch map copied from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1958 for Lexington, KY.

**Verbal Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the F.W. Woolworth building and which is occupied by the structure today.

**Additional Documentation**

Maps:

Map 1 USGS topographic map showing location of property.

Map 2 Boundary description sketch map.

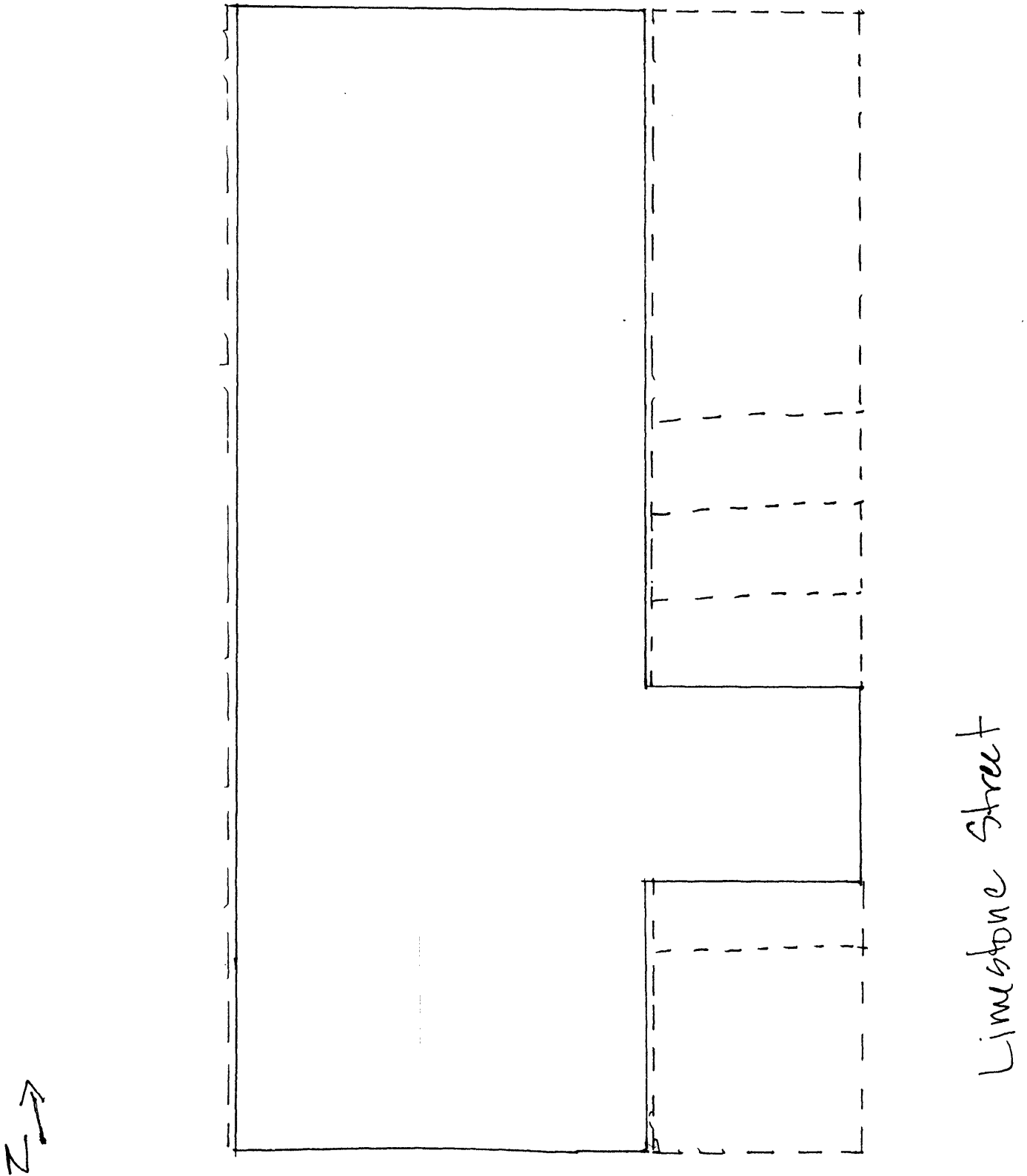
Plans:

Figure 1 Floor plans of the first, second and third floor for the F.W.  
Woolworth building

Historic Photographs:

Figure 1 Image of the main facade as it appeared in the *Lexington Herald* on  
Sunday, September 5, 1948 (pg. 5) four days prior to the grand opening.

W. Main St.

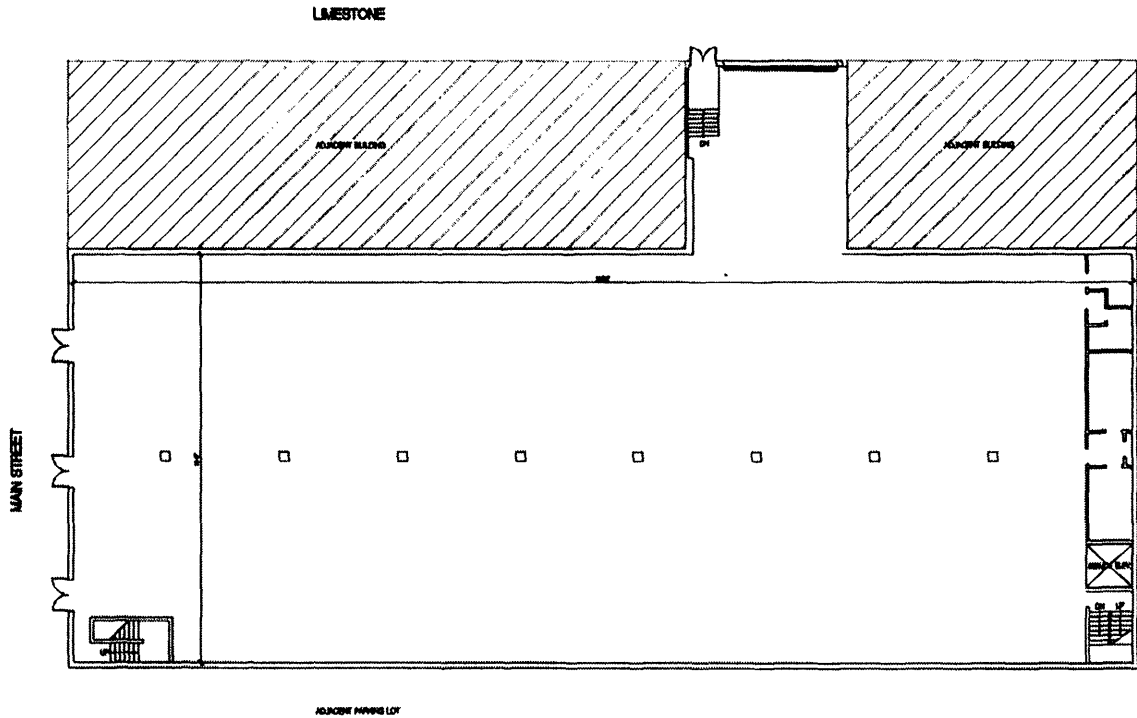


1" = 25'  
F.W. Woolworth Building boundary delineated with solid line.

### Attachment 'C'

### Preliminary Floor Plans

*F.W. Woodworth Building  
106 W. Main St., Lexington, KY*

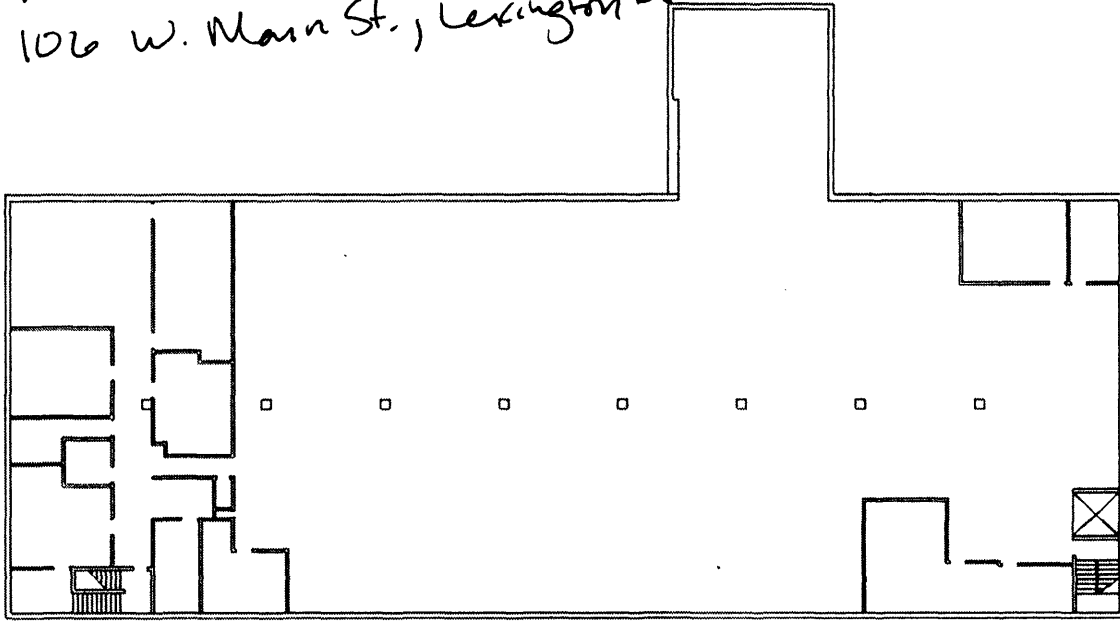


First Floor Plan

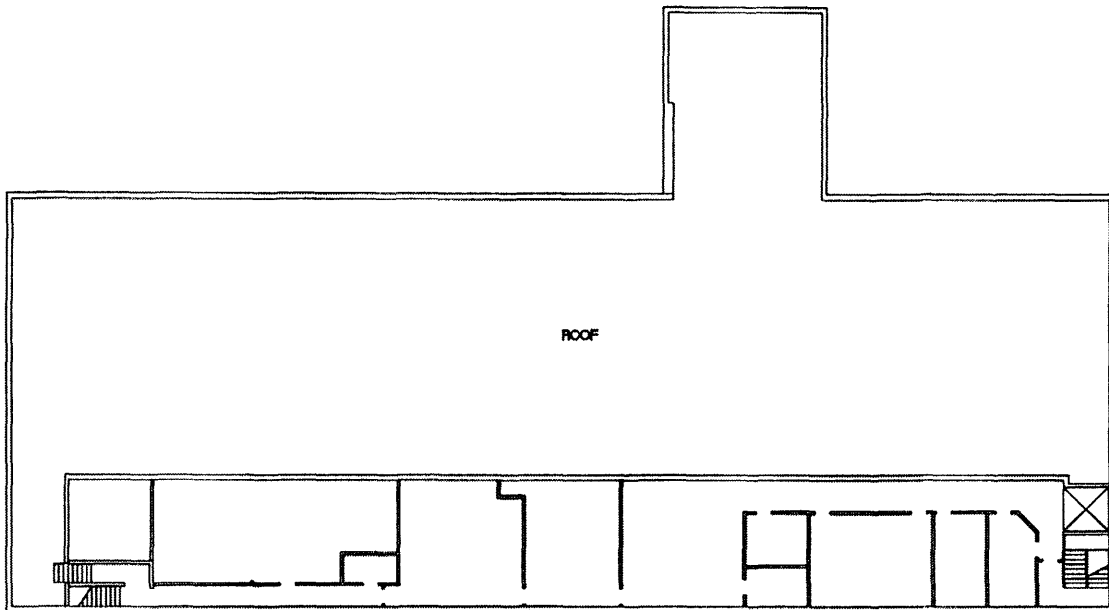
*Not to Scale*

*Drawings courtesy of Kentucky Science and  
Technology Corporation (KSTC)*

F.W. Woolworth Building  
106 W. Main St., Lexington KY



Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan

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Photo Key

All photographs represent the building, streetscape features and geographical context of the F.W Woolworth building. The property is located at 106 West Main St., Lexington (Fayette County), Kentucky. All photographs were taken by nomination author Cynthia Johnson in March, 2002 and the negatives remain in her possession.

- 1 Looking south at the main facade with the display windows and recessed entrances.
- 2 Looking southeast at primary facade with the streamlined masthead.
- 3 Looking southwest along Main Street corridor.
- 4 Looking southeast along Main Street.
- 5 Looking northwest at secondary facade (in the center) on Limestone Street.
- 6 Looking west at the secondary entrance and display area.
- 7 Looking northwest at the rear facade the faces Vine Street.
- 8 Looking northeast at the west wall and rear facade. .
- 9 Looking northeast at the west wall.
- 10 Looking south at the main entrance with original doors intact.
- 11 Looking south at second story casement window and glazed terra cotta detailing.
- 12 Looking southwest at intact closed storefront display window.
- 13 Looking south at interior of first floor sales area.
- 14 Looking north at interior of first floor toward entrance doors.
- 15 Looking at east wall of first floor with display cases.
- 16 Looking at west wall of first floor where the lunch counter was located.
- 17 Looking southwest at typical stairwell.
- 18 Looking northwest at second floor storage area.
- 19 Looking northeast at second floor storage bin with part of plaster ceiling intact.
- 20 Looking east into second floor area of the Limestone wing.
- 21 Looking east into second floor corridor for offices.
- 22 Looking northeast into second floor office space with deteriorated plaster.
- 23 Looking northwest at second floor office and safe. Note that the plaster finish is intact in this office.
- 24 Looking north at third floor corridor.
- 25 Looking northwest at third floor dumbwaiter that served the first floor lunch counter.