

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

976

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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: N. Mill St., W. Saginaw Ave., W. Center Ave.

City or town: St. Louis State: MI County: Gratiot

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A x B x C ___ D

<u>Brian D Conway</u>	<u>10/8/14</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>MI SHPO</u>	
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

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

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: _____)

Patrick Andrews

12/03/2014

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian - Italianate, High Victorian Gothic

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements - Commercial Style

Art Moderne

International Style

Other: Commercial Brick

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Brick, stone, glass, wood, EIFS, T-111

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The St. Louis Downtown Historic District encompasses the historic core area of St. Louis' central business district, located along three blocks of North Mill Street between West Washington Avenue and North Avenue. It also includes a small number of buildings on two cross streets, West Saginaw Avenue and West Center Avenue, west of Mill. The district contains thirty-six commercial buildings, dating from the 1870s to the 1990s, with most of them constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The buildings are predominantly brick, one and two stories in height, and range in style from Victorian to International style. Nine of the thirty-six buildings are non-contributing due to extensive alterations or dates of construction less than fifty years ago.

Narrative Description

The district is part of St. Louis' 130-acre original plat of 1855, which forms a grid pattern of streets running east/west and north/south. The area has a generally flat topography. The district extends for three blocks, approximately .20 of a mile, along the primary downtown north-south corridor, North Mill Street. The district includes the west sides of the 100, 200 and 300 blocks and most of the east side of the 100 block of North Mill Street. The boundaries were drawn to omit newer buildings around the fringes. The

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

district also includes small portions of two cross streets, West Saginaw Avenue and West Center Avenue, west of North Mill. The entire downtown district comprises approximately 4.95 acres.

North Mill Street is a two-lane, two-way street with angled parking on both sides. Except for buildings on the side streets, the district buildings all stand directly on the sidewalk line. There are concrete sidewalks, and the streetscape also includes modern Victorian-style light standards with black metal decorative poles topped by round lanterns with LED lighting and ornate finials. At the corners of N. Mill Street and the cross streets, the streetlights also include attached decorative street signs. The streetscape also displays Lollizam Crab trees planted in square cutouts in the sidewalk close to the street curb.

The downtown buildings are predominantly commercial, with retail stores, restaurants, and professional offices on the ground floors and apartments on some of the upper floors. They are primarily late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century brick two-story buildings, intermixed with some one-story and one three-story building. They are spaced closely together, most with shared walls.

The east-west-running West Washington Avenue, state trunkline M-46, serves as a primary roadway through St. Louis, and the district extends north from its intersection with North Mill Street. Mill Street runs north three blocks through the district, north one more block to the historic Mill Pond on Pine River, then across the river and into the city's north side residential area. Mill also extends south from the West Washington intersection past modern commercial development into a south-side residential area. This southern leg of Mill Street is less a primary street in St. Louis than Michigan Avenue, which angles south-southwest from the Washington/Mill intersection and connects St. Louis with the neighboring city of Alma a few miles away.

Turning north onto N. Mill Street from Washington, the first or 100 block contains the district's largest collection of architecturally significant buildings, including both the east and west sides. Key among these is the only three-story building in the district, the Harrington House/Commercial State Bank Block. The Colonial Theater Block, located at the northwest corner of N. Mill Street and W. Washington Avenue, was constructed in 1908 and housed a live performance theater upstairs, seating 600 people, and retail stores on the ground floor. It is a reddish-brown brick building with stone accents and retains much of its original integrity. The Harrington House/Commercial State Bank, located at the southwest corner of N. Mill Street and W. Saginaw Avenue, was constructed in 1881. Its upper two stories retain the original Victorian Gothic architectural style with red brick and limestone trim, and the ground floor Moderne/International style finishes dating from 1949.

The west side of the 200 block of N. Mill Street is comprised predominantly of narrow-fronted two-story buildings displaying a mixture of architectural styles and building materials. This block contains two of the most visually distinctive commercial buildings in downtown St. Louis, both built in the late 1800s, the High Victorian Gothic Charles Building, 217 N. Mill Street, and the Clark Building, 223 N. Mill, with its dramatic cobblestone Late Victorian front.

The part of the west side of the 300 block of N. Mill Street included in the district is comprised of four buildings. A key one is the Holcomb Opera House Building at the northwest corner of N. Mill Street and W. Center Avenue. This two-story painted brick building, constructed in 1881, lost its third story and mansard roof in the mid-1950s, but still retains some of its original features.

The district also includes three buildings on two cross streets. Built in the 1920s-30s, these buildings are located on W. Saginaw Avenue and W. Center Avenue, just west of N. Mill and east of the alley to its

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

west. They were originally constructed as an apartment complex, a doctor's office and a printing facility. They retain many of their original features.

The downtown district is flanked on the north by the Pine River, a small city park, and a municipal pool, which was constructed in the 1950s. The 200 and 300 blocks of N. Mill Street on the east side not included in the district are predominantly modern buildings that would not contribute to the district because of loss of historic character or construction dates less than fifty years ago. On the south the district is bordered by W. Washington Avenue (M-46), with its modern commercial development. West of the district, Pine and streets to its west are part of an older residential area. To the east is a mix of land uses that includes non-historic commercial development, the city's 1956-62 City Hall, 1990s high school, and, beyond them, Clapp Park and residential development.

Inventory

The inventory entries are organized alphabetically by street and then in ascending numbers. N. Mill Street entries are first listed on the east side, then on the west side. Each building contributes to the district's historic character and significance unless specifically designated as non-contributing in the inventory entry.

A number of standard sources were used for the inventory entries including city directories, Sanborn fire insurance maps and historic photographs courtesy of the St. Louis Historical Society. Additional resources were used for some entries and are specifically cited where applicable.

W. Center Avenue

215. Warehouse Apartments (between 1925 and 1938)

This two-story free-standing building is north-facing on W. Center Ave. and has a front-facing L-shape footprint with a one-story rear wing. The centrally located front entry is slightly recessed and flanked on the west by two double-hung vinyl windows. The east side of the front entry is deeply recessed with a single large vinyl display window. A 1950s photo in *A St. Louis Album* shows an overhead garage door in this location. Above the display window is a screened-in wood cantilevered porch on the second story. The upper story has three evenly spaced double-hung vinyl windows. Although the exterior is currently clad in vinyl siding, the 1950s photo shows this building with a brick front façade and arched window openings. Vinyl windows pierce the sides and rear of the building at various locations and it has a flat roof.

Based on Sanborn maps, this building was built sometime between 1925 and 1938. Over the years it appears to have been utilized primarily as a manufacturing/office facility on the ground floor and apartments on the second story. The 1938 Sanborn labels this building as "Printing," with a rectangular footprint with the one-story recessed northeast corner at the location of the former garage door. The 1957 Sanborn shows the addition of the rear wing, creating the "L" shape, and labels it an "Automobile Garage and Office." The *St. Louis Leader Press* occupied this space from 1951 to 1970, when it was taken over by Mid-Michigan Printing. It later served as a retail space, then storage space on the lower level with apartments in the second story.

Source: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012).

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

N. Mill Street, East Side, from the North

112 N. Mill. Expressions Beauty and Boutique (1970); Non-contributing

The one-story commercial building has a recessed center entry flanked by a large display window on each side, which span nearly the full width of the storefront. The low bulkhead is of red brick, and the balance of the building is clad in vinyl siding. An extension on the rear was added at a later date. This building is non-contributing because of its construction date less than fifty years ago.

Prior to the construction of this building, this site was occupied by a single building, which served as a saloon, harness shop, vulcanizing shop, grocery store and men's clothing store over the years. When the current building was constructed in 1970, it was owned and operated by Jack's Party Store. It remained a party store for many years before being purchased by beauty salon owners in the early 1990s.

114-16 N. Mill. Boys Club of America/Knights of Pythias Building (1903, remodeled 1958 and later)

The two-story, brick building was constructed in 1903. The modern storefront is divided into two sections by a brick pier, with brick piers also marking the ends of the front façade, and is clad in modern brown brick veneer. The north section contains the off-center deeply recessed entry with two glass doors. The south section contains four small fixed display windows. A canvas bubble canopy spans the full width of the building separating the first and second stories. The painted brick upper façade retains much of its original integrity, and is divided into four sections by raised brick piers, with a one-over-one double-hung window in each section. Above the windows is a broad, painted stone beltcourse, which spans the full width of the upper front façade. Corbeled brickwork supports the frieze, which features long and narrow sawtooth brickwork panels and is capped with metal. A painted stone plaque with the date of construction "1903" is located in the center of the upper façade directly below the parapet. A circa 1915 photo shows a large oriel window in each half of the upper façade. These windows were later removed and are no longer visible in a circa 1940s photo. There was also a tall elaborate cornice, which was also removed. There is a one-story brick addition on the rear.

The earliest occupant, based on the 1910 Sanborn, was a furniture store, which occupied both storefronts. By the 1920s "The Club" occupied it, and then in 1940 the A & P Store. In the 1950s the building was occupied by a department store, and then in 1958 by the Boys Clubs of America, who remodeled both the interior and storefront (the present storefront appears to be much newer). They remained there until the late 1970s. The Knights of Pythias and Pythian Sisters occupied the second story for many years.

Source: *The State Journal*, 6/21/1959.

118 N. Mill. P. W. & I. F. Cole Building (1917)

The two-story red-brown brick building, with stone accents, has a single storefront, with an off-center entry on the south end of the front facade. The storefront is divided into three sections by large brick piers, with a wider section in the center. The double-door entry fills the south section, flanked by a large display window on the north side and capped by a transom. The other two storefront sections contain large display windows with low brick bulkheads. A wide panel of vertical wood siding with a small store sign spans the width of the front façade, covering the former transom area. The upper façade is divided by raised piers into three sections, which align with the lower storefront sections. Four one-over-one wood windows with stone lintels light the upper façade, two in the center section and one on each end. Three horizontal recessed brick hexagon designs and corbelled brickwork span the area above the windows to the cornice. In the upper center section of the facade, a smooth stone sign reads "P.W. & I. F. Cole 1917." The cornice is capped with metal coping. A garage door is located on the rear of the building.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Father and son Prentice W. Cole and Ivan F. Cole constructed this building in 1917. According to the 1910 census, Prentice W. Cole and his family lived on a farm in Bethany Township in Gratiot County. The 1920 census lists Prentice living in St. Louis, but shows no occupation, while son Ivan resided on their family farm in Bethany Township. According to family relative Phil Raske, the Coles were investors and were not involved in retailing. Ivan resided on the family farm until 1976 when he died, and his descendants still live there today.

The first identifiable business at this location appears in the 1921 city directory as an automobile company called St. Louis Overland Sales and Service. Remnants of this business are still visible today including the overhead garage door on the rear of the building, and an interior car elevator, which took cars up to the second story either for a display showroom or service. The 1924 Sanborn labels the building as a "garage with a capacity for 36 cars, a concrete floor, iron columns, electric lights and steam heat." By 1929 the city directory lists St. Louis Hardware as the occupant, followed by Kroger Grocery in the 1930s-40s. A circa 1940s photo shows the front entry in the center of the storefront, with rolled up canvas awnings topping each of the three storefront sections. In 1951 the A & P Store moved here from next door (116); it remained in this location for nearly twenty years, after which another grocery store occupied the space until the late 1970s. An auto parts company moved in at that time and remained there for over twenty years.

Sources: St. Louis Historical Society's photo collection; Unites States Census, 1910 and 1920 (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1910 and 1920), electronic document accessed at www.ancestry.com; Oral interview with Phil Raske, distant relative of P. W. and I. F. Cole.

122 – 24 N. Mill. Fauth & Schlichtig Block (1883); Ronald A. Gillis, architect/builder

The two-story orange-red brick Late Victorian building has two storefronts, each with a center, slant-sided recessed entry. The entries are flanked on each side by large aluminum-trimmed display windows, on low stuccoed brick bulkheads trimmed in wood. A third entry, on the north end of the front facade, accesses the second story. A tall pent roof clad with asphalt shingles spans the front façade between the first and second stories. The upper façade aligns with the lower storefronts, with two 3-window wide sections and one single-window section above the second-story entry door on the north end. The segmental-arch-head window openings contain one-over-one square-head windows and are accented with stone keystones and sills. Brick corbelling spans the area above the windows beneath the frieze. In the upper center façade below the cornice is a square stone plaque, "Fauth and Schlichtig 1883." Historic photos show a tall, elaborate cornice, which no longer exists and has been replaced with metal coping. There is a brick one-story addition on the rear of the building.

In the earliest Sanborn map, 1884, this site is occupied by a hides/meat store and saloon. An 1878 city directory lists Vogt & Schlichlig (Simon Vogt and Alois Schlichlig) as butchers and meat purveyors, who probably constructed this building for their business. They remained in business until the 1890s when John Fields purchased the store to operate a grocery business. Fields was a seasoned retailer, who came to St. Louis in 1858 and operated a flour and seed store and several grocery stores before moving to this location. His son, Marsh, joined him in business at that time and besides groceries, Fields Grocery also carried lanterns, chimneys, matches, wicks, kerosene and vinegar. Later when phones became commonplace, customers would call in their orders and groceries were delivered by a four-wheeled cart and horse. The store also became a favorite downtown hang-out for farm families and Civil War vets and remained in business until 1934 when the store closed. Subsequently a series of drugstores occupied this space from the 1930s until the late 1970s. In the 1980s it was occupied by a chemical soil stabilization business and later a Hallmark shop. The adjoining storefront, 124, was occupied by a saloon from 1884

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

until 1908 when George Clark opened a billiards hall there. Clark remained in business until the early 1920s when W. T. Fuller occupied the space and opened a restaurant. From the 1930s to late 1970s, a series of shoe stores operated at this site. According to Sanborn maps, a cigar factory operated on the second floor from at least 1888 until 1899.

Sources: Willard Bigelow Collection, *Men Who Are Making St. Louis* (1903); David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003); Willard Davis Tucker, *The History of Gratiot County* (Saginaw, MI.: Press of Seemann & Peters, 1913).

126-32 N. Mill. Wessels Block/Peters Hardware (1881); Ronald A. Gillis, architect/builder

The two-story cream brick building with red brick and stone accents was built in 1881. The four-bay building has addresses 126-132, but the northern storefront (132) was incorporated into the adjoining building (134-36) with D & C Variety Store's expansion in the 1940s – thus this north-end bay is now finished like 134-36's facade. The 126-32 storefront is currently divided into two sections, a three-bay southern portion housing Peters Hardware plus a one-bay section at the north end now part of St. Louis Variety. The Peters Hardware section is divided into three bays by broad brick piers and has a central, slant-sided recessed entry. The entry is flanked by large aluminum-trimmed display windows with low wood-sided bulkheads. This central entry section may date from the 1950s. The section on each side of the entry part contains a modern bay window atop a brick bulkhead, all apparently dating from a more recent renovation. The storefront is clad in a modern brown brick. A second-story entry door is located on the north between the two northern bays. Separating the first and second stories is a modern tall pent roof clad with asphalt shingles. The upper facade is divided into four three-window sections by raised red brick piers, those in the 132 north bay painted to match 134-36. The windows are wood one-over-ones, with elaborate segmental-arch hoods of raised red brick and prominent stone keystones. Above the windows is an elaborate corbelled cream brick entablature, topped by a band of red brick dentils and a molded brick cornice, and capped with stone coping. The brick parapet curves upward into an arch in the center of the front facade and contains a stone plaque, which reads, "Wessels Block 1881." The upper facade in the second bay from the north displays the painted words "Dental Rooms." According to the 1921 City Directory, Dr. L. A. Ludlum had a dentist office "above the 5 and 10 cent store," which would have been at this location. There is a modern one-story brick addition on the rear, which includes a rear entrance.

Aaron Wessels was a local businessman and hotel owner who built the Wessels House hotel on the corner of Washington and Mill Streets in the late 1870s to accommodate the new tourists visiting the Magnetic Springs. He was also in the hardware business with George H. Scriver and built this building in 1881 to house their hardware store, Scriver and Wessels Hardware, and other retail stores and offices. The new brick building replaced "an ugly area of burned out buildings." According to the first Sanborn map of 1884, a hardware store occupied 126-128, a dry goods store 130 and a hand-printing business was upstairs. St. Louis Hardware Co. became the successor to Scriver and Wessels Hardware, and continued to operate another twenty years in business at this location. In the 1930s this storefront briefly housed a Kroger Grocery, until it moved south to 118, and it reverted back to being a hardware store, operated by Fred Himes. In the early 1950s Max and Ruth Peters purchased the store from Fred Himes and started Peters Hardware. In 1968 the Peters sold the business to their nephew, Tom Morrow, who continues to operate Peters Hardware today. Fleming Shoe Store occupied 126 in the 1930s, eventually selling out to Fae and Maynard Strouse, who operated Strouse Shoe Store until the 1970s. Tom Morrow purchased this property from the Strouses in the 1980s and removed the common wall to expand his hardware business. On the north side of Peters Hardware (130), the 1910 Sanborn shows a billiards business occupying the space, presumably operated by C. D. Gallant. This space was later occupied by a clothing store and in the early 1950s Knapp's Bakery took over the space and remained there for nearly twenty-five years. This

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

store space was eventually purchased by Tom Morrow in the early 1980s and connected to Peters Hardware. According to Mr. Morrow, remnants of duckpin bowling equipment were discovered in the basement of 130 when it was purchased, presumably from the 1910s billiards business.

Sources: David McMacken, *Saratoga of the West* (St. Louis, MI.: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2008); Oral interview with Tom Morrow, owner of Peters Hardware.

134 –36. Harrington Block/Ben Franklin Store/D & C Store (c. 1870s)

The two-story painted brick building has Italianate-style elements and is located on the southeast corner of N. Mill and W. Saginaw Streets. It could possibly be the oldest building in the downtown. The building includes the two storefronts at 134-136, but the store that occupied the ground story expanded into the 132 storefront in the adjoining building to the south in the 1940s so that that building's north storefront and upper façade match those of 134-36. The storefront is a 1950s-60s design with a single off-center recessed entry near the north end of the front façade, and large display windows that span the entire width of the front façade. The sills are textured stone and the low bulkhead is tan brick. The upper façade is divided into two, three-window sections by raised brick piers. The arched windows, which are currently boarded up, have segmental-arch hoods with stone keystones and sills. Approximately 2-3 feet of the frieze/cornice area is covered by vertical vinyl siding. The upper façade is separated from the storefront by a wide metal sign, featuring the name of the store, "St. Louis Variety," spanning the front, and the storefront is capped by a green awning.

The windowless north-facing Saginaw Street façade is clad with vertical vinyl siding. According to a 1940s photo from the St. Louis Historical Society, the Saginaw Street upper façade had the same arched windows as on the front façade and a stairway to the upper story offices. There is a concrete block brick-clad one-story addition on the rear, with a covered porch rear entry.

According to a May 19, 1938, news article in the *St. Louis Leader*, this building was one of four brick buildings that existed as early as 1870. The 1878 City Directory states that H. Harrington & Company operated a dry goods and general merchandise store at this location. This is confirmed on the earliest Sanborn in 1884, where the building is also labeled as "Harrington Block." According to *St. Louis at 150*, in 1912 the first motion pictures in town were projected on the exterior wall of "Dr. Wheeler's office building," which would be the north-facing Saginaw Street façade of this building. On Saturday nights, the residents would stand in the street to watch this amazing new form of entertainment. As of the 1888 Sanborn, the post office occupied the northern storefront (136); it remained there until 1922, when it moved to the Holcomb Opera House at 305 N. Mill St. The vacated space was then occupied by a variety store in the 1920s, eventually becoming a Ben Franklin store in the 1930s. In March 1940 D & C Variety Store purchased all the stock and fixtures from Ben Franklin and made plans to expand their store. The southern storefront (134) was occupied by McIntyre Drug Store as early as the 1880s-90s, and remained in business until 1940 when D & C bought them out in order to enlarge their new store. At this time D & C also acquired part of the adjoining Wessels Block (132) as part of their expansion. According to city directories, offices occupied the second story, including those of Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Robinson. St. Louis Variety took over the D & C Store in the mid-1990s.

Sources: *St. Louis Leader* 5/19/1938; David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003).

N. Mill Street, West side, from the North

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

101-05 N. Mill. Colonial Theater Block/Young's Dept. Store (1908)

This two-story building, marking the northwest Mill/Washington corner, has walls of reddish-brown paving brick, with smooth concrete or stone window sills and caps. It was constructed as the Colonial Theater Block. There are three storefronts facing N. Mill separated by painted brick piers. The two southern storefronts (101-103) are mirror images of one another, with off-center entries that, located side by side, are set into a single broad slant-sided recess. The entries are flanked by large aluminum-trimmed display windows with transoms and low painted brick bulkheads. A freestanding brick pier in the center of the recess between the entries supports the upper portion of the building. The northern storefront (105) has an off-center, recessed entry at its north end, flanked by large aluminum-trimmed display windows with transoms and a low brick bulkhead. The lower façade is clad in painted brick and each storefront is shaded with its own canvas striped awning. The unpainted brick upper Mill Street façade has three bays divided by raised brick piers, which align with the three storefronts on the ground floor. There are two square-head double-hung, one-over-one windows, topped by transoms, in each bay. They have smooth concrete or stone sills and lintels, the lintels with broad keystones. The year the building was constructed, 1908, is displayed in raised numerals formed by header bricks in the center bay below the parapet. Early historic photographs show the "1908" projecting above the rest as part of a decorative parapet. Sometime after the 1920s the parapet was rebuilt and the "1908" incorporated into a raised upper façade. Also at this time, approximately three feet of the top of the northern 105 bay façade was removed so that the roofline of this part of the building now aligns with the height of the adjoining building to the north (107). The parapet has a simple concrete or stone cap. A plain lintel spans the width of the three storefronts and a wood store sign hangs from its central portion. The Washington Street (south-facing) façade is divided into seven bays of unequal size by raised brick piers. This façade displays several square-head double-hung, one-over-one windows, those toward the front topped by transoms and with stone lintels and sills. The second bay to the west from the corner in the second story has a closed-in door that once served as a fire escape for the upper-story theater. A historic photo circa 1910-15 shows a metal staircase leading to this door. Below the parapet in the slightly taller front section of the side façade, an original strip or panel of decorative brickwork survives – an identical detail in the front upper façade has been removed. The south façade has large aluminum-trimmed display windows, with brick bulkheads, in its east end, near the N. Mill front. A service entry door is located on the western end of the Washington St. façade. A few historic elements exist in the interior including tin ceilings on the ground floor and wood window trim and wainscoting on the second floor.

In 1876 Henry Martin built the first opera house in St. Louis on this site and called it Martin's Opera House. The opera house was on the second floor and hosted road shows, operettas, comic and melodramatic plays, lectures, dances, and variety shows and served as a public hall. The ground floor housed a grocery, feed store and bazaar. In 1908 a fire destroyed this building and the current brick building was constructed to house a theater, named the Colonial, upstairs and ground-floor retail spaces. The theater occupied a two-story tall space and seated 600 people. It flourished until the mid-1920s, when talking movies ended live entertainment. It was then still used as a gathering place for meetings and special events. When the St. Louis High School burned in 1932, the space housed classrooms.

Beginning in the 1920s the ground floor was primarily occupied by family-owned department stores. One of the first occupants in the early 1920s was Young's Department Store, which sold ladies clothing and eventually expanded their business to the upper story. The store was sold in 1950 to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bennett, who renamed it Bennett's Department Store and added men's and children's clothing as well as baby goods to their lines. The Bennetts then sold out to the McKims in 1974, who continued to operate the business as a clothing department store. The current owners, the Kubins, purchased it from the McKims and established the present furniture store, Kubin's Furniture & Mattresses.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

Sources: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003).

107-09 N. Mill. Martin & Guff Block/Betty Barry Shop (1883); Ronald A. Gillis, architect/builder

This building is identified on the earliest Sanborn map of 1884 as the "Martin & Guff Block," built for Henry Martin, who also had the neighboring Martin's Opera House constructed on the corner, and partner William Guff. The 2-story, red brick stone-trimmed Victorian building has two storefronts, which were remodeled in the 1950s-60s. The southern storefront (107) has an off-center slant-sided deeply recessed entry, currently unused, flanked by an angled display window and large tripartite front display window on a low bulkhead. The entry to the upper story, located in the center of the building front, is a painted wood paneled door sheltered by a narrow canvas awning displaying the store's name, "Common Threads." The northern storefront (109) replicates the southern storefront and contains the store entry. The entire ground floor façade is clad in black vertical ribbed metal siding, with the slightly set-back former transom window locations clad in the same sheeting placed horizontally. The upper façade contains seven segmental-arch-head window openings with brick heads, with cut stone keystones and imposts, and a common stone sill. The windows are currently covered with painted plywood. The center window is framed by raised brick piers that rise to a corbelled brick detail well above the window. A raised brick pier rising to the flat-top parapet marks each end of the plain unadorned upper front façade. Early Sanborn maps and an 1890s photograph show a third story and elaborate cornice on this building, which were removed sometime after 1910. The interior retains the original wood floor and tin ceiling.

The earliest, 1884 Sanborn map shows the footprint of this building the same as it is today, including the center entry to the upper story. The southern storefront (107) was occupied by a grocery and dry goods store for many years, with the GAR Hall on the third floor. No. 107 was occupied by Gambles Hardware Store in the 1930s and later by a plumber, home and auto supply store and an osteopathic doctor, William Knowles, in the 1950s-60s. Eventually it was occupied by the *Daily Record Leader* newspaper and a civil engineering and surveying company. The northern storefront (109) was occupied by a furniture store, bank and saloon, with the Knights of Pythias Hall on the third floor. By the 1920s the store was occupied by a men's clothing store, then a ladies clothing store, called Betty Barry Shop and operated by Katherine Mullinax. Mullinax began her career in St. Louis as a pharmacist and in 1947 when she was unable to buy the pharmacy where she worked, she bought the Betty Barry Shop. The store became a purveyor of fine women's clothing. According to local historian David McMacken, "Katherine's clientele enjoyed excellent personal service and expert gentle advice, often traveling from distant towns to purchase these garments." The current property owners purchased the building from Mullinax in 2005 and utilize both storefronts for their quilt shop.

Sources: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); *Daily Record-Leader*, 11/19/1971; Willard Tucker, *Gratiot County, Michigan: Historical, Biographical, Statistical* (Saginaw, MI: Press of Seeman and Peters, 2013).

111-13 N. Mill. Mark Dolber Grocery/Davidson Electric/St. Louis Automotive (between 1900 and 1910)

This is a two-story painted concrete block building whose front displays a variety of block forms. It has two storefronts with side-by-side central recessed entries separated by a freestanding smooth concrete block piers of octagonal form above a square pedestal base whose top transitions into the octagon form. The lower stories of the piers marking the building ends are of the same form. The upper, second-story portions of the piers are of also of smooth-face concrete block, but with angled edges, and rise to low flat-top pedestals above the parapet. The upper façade above second-story windows is of smaller rock-face brick or concrete block, with two horizontal strips of smooth-face brick or block. The northern storefront (113) is a 1950s-60s design with a deeply recessed front that slants gently inward to the door at its south

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

end. The large aluminum-trimmed display windows rest on low stacked blonde Roman brick bulkheads. Fishscale vinyl siding covers the former transom area up nearly to the base of the second-story windows. A wood paneled door to the upper story is located between the two store entries. The southern storefront (111) has been recently remodeled and has a square-plan entry adjacent to the others, flanked by three fixed square windows that only partly fill the formerly taller display window area. The windows rest on and are outlined by an EIFS treatment that rises above an older (most likely 1959) low brown-tan brick bulkhead. The former transom area is also faced in an EIFS panel whose face projects outward slightly from the storefront beneath. The second-story façade is divided into four bays, each containing paired square-head windows, by rock-face concrete block piers, those marking the building ends and center division between storefronts, and two more that subdivide the second story above each storefront. The windows on the northern section (113) are vinyl double-hung, one-over-ones, those on the southern section (111) two-over-two double-hung metal windows with storms. All windows have stone or concrete sills and wood lintels. The back of the building is clad in vinyl siding and has two one-story concrete block additions, which were constructed sometime between 1925 and 1938. The 113 addition has four overhead garage doors on the north façade and one on the west façade, which fronts the alley. It is possible these doors were added when the building was occupied by St. Louis Automotive Supply.

Sanborn maps show this space vacant in 1899, and the current two-storefront building appearing in the 1910 map. The southern storefront (111) was occupied by a bakery in the 1920s, then the Mark Dolber Grocery in the 1930s-40s, a men's clothing store in the 1950s, then Robert Wilson Real Estate in the 1960s, before converting back to a men's clothing store in the early 1970s. Later occupants include a video rental store, television repair store and craft shop. Currently it houses the law office of Rhonda M. Clark. The northern storefront (113) was occupied in the 1920s by the Davidson Electric Store, which sold electric fans, lamps, heaters and radios. It was occupied by an oil lease company in the 1940s and later purchased by St. Louis Automotive Supply, who did a major "modernization" in 1959 with a new storefront and interior renovation. A hair salon occupied this space by the late 1970s and continues to operate in this location today.

Source: *The State Journal*, 6/21/1959.

115-17 N. Mill. Family Lunch (1959)

The brick one-story building is a simple and straightforward 1950s design and contains two storefronts, which are now combined and operated by one owner. The building front is asymmetrical, the north storefront occupying nearly two-thirds of the front façade. The two separate entries (only one is currently in use) are located slightly off-center toward the south end and separated by a brick column marking the façade's midpoint. The doors are flanked on both sides by narrow brick piers and large aluminum-trimmed display windows fill much of the rest of the front above bulkheads of elongated rock-face painted brick. The storefront piers and upper façade are of smooth red Roman brick. A shallow flat-top aluminum canopy spans the full width of the front façade. A vertical name sign projects diagonally from the building front's midpoint.

Prior to the construction of this building, the site was occupied by two separate buildings. One of the most well-known occupants of 117 was the Fuller Restaurant, which was owned and operated by longtime restaurateurs William and Fannie Fuller in the 1930s and 1940s. It was later purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Smith and renamed Family Lunch. The Smiths later purchased the building next door (115), which was occupied by Walker Barber Shop, and replaced both buildings with this new building in 1959. The smaller storefront on the south side (115) continued to operate as a barber shop, while the larger storefront on the north (117) operated as Family Lunch. The building was sold in 1976 to China Garden, still the occupant, and the two storefronts were combined.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Source: *St. Louis Photo News*, 10/21/1976.

119 N. Mill. E. C. Phillips/T. Jefferson Hoxie Building (1870s)

This Italianate, one-story, front-gabled building is free-standing, though closely adjoining buildings on both sides, and has many of its original architectural elements. The double-door front entry, with arched transom, is centrally located and flanked on each side by a large, arched double-hung window, now with vinyl sash. Both the windows and front entry are trimmed with simple decorative hood moldings. The roof's projecting eaves are supported by two pairs of decorative wooden brackets near the gable peak. A small oculus window adorns the front gable between the sets of brackets. The building is clad in wood siding. The interior shows evidence of two offices occupying this space in the past.

This was the original location of the Harrington, Saviers & Company Bank, a private bank established in 1874. The bank remained in this location until it moved to the new Harrington House building at 133-137 N. Mill St. in 1881. In the 1884 Sanborn map the building was labeled an "office building," and subsequent Sanborn maps of 1899 and 1910 list it as an "insurance office." One occupant during this time was E. C. Phillips, who started his insurance and real estate business in 1890 and moved to this location in the 1900s and remained in business until 1935. T. Jefferson Hoxie later became one of the longest lasting occupants, operating his law practice here from 1942 to 1978. Mr. Hoxie served as a two-term mayor of St. Louis, and also served fourteen years as a state representative. He was a state Constitutional Convention delegate who served as chairman of that body at one time. He was also the St. Louis City Attorney for twenty-five years. In the early years Mr. Hoxie often shared this building with other businesses including Robert Wilson Real Estate and Ross Miller Insurance. In 1978 the building was occupied by the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, and later the St. Louis Photo News. The St. Louis Historical Society also occupied this site in recent years.

Sources: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); T. Jefferson Hoxie brochure provided by current building owner.

121 N. Mill. A & P Store (mid-to-late 1920s)

This narrow-fronted one-story red Commercial Brick building has its deeply recessed front entry located at the north end of the façade. To the south low display windows rest on tall bulkheads of red brick that don't match the color of the original brick façade end piers – perhaps dating from c. 1950s – and the upper front has a frieze supported on corbelled brickwork. The front and the angled window facing the entry have aluminum trim. Above the entry and extending across the front façade are painted metal signs that bear the name and promotional information for the current building occupant, My PC Pro. There's a long concrete block addition on the rear, with concrete block stepped parapet walls on either side.

The early Sanborn maps show this site with a two-story building occupied by a grocery, restaurant and a tailor. Sometime in the early 1900s this building was demolished and then this one-story building constructed between 1925 and 1929. The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A & P Store) is listed as the occupant in 1929 and remained in this location until the late 1930s. Later occupants include the Demas Café in the 1950s, Star Restaurant in the 1960s and Cavanaugh Construction and St. Louis Chamber of Commerce in the 1970s. Lodewyk, Nesen and McKim Insurance Agency purchased the building in the late 1970s and retained it until 2007, when it was sold to the current owner, My PC Pro.

123-25 N. Mill. Brewer's Meat Market/Adams Grocery (between 1900 and 1910). Non-contributing

Based on Sanborn maps, this two-story building was constructed between 1900 and 1910. It has been heavily altered in recent years. The storefront has a recessed front entry at the south end of the façade, and

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

is flanked by two groupings of large plate glass display windows to the north, which span nearly the full width of the front façade. The storefront and bulkhead are clad in a red clinker-type brick. A projecting vinyl awning spans the width of the building. The upper front façade has two bays outlined by projecting piers. Each displays a centrally positioned slant-sided oriele window that contains a six-over-six double-hung vinyl window in its front. Historic streetscape photos from the early 1900s show these two bay windows visible at that time, though in the old photos they appear larger and perhaps supported by brackets or corbels. A 1959 newspaper photo shows these bay windows in their same general size and configuration as they are today. The upper façade is clad in EIFS, including the front, raised piers and frieze, and oriele window units. There are two additions on the back of this building. The older one is of concrete block, and the newer one has a shed-type roof and is clad in vinyl siding. This building is non-contributing because of its extensive alterations.

Prior to 1900 this site was occupied by a one-story building that housed a variety of businesses in two storefronts, including a bazaar, millinery, grocery and confectionary. Sometime between 1900 and 1910 this two-story building was constructed and the southern storefront (123) was subsequently occupied by Brewer's Meat Market. Founded in 1885 by William R. Brewer, Brewer's Meat Market remained a family-owned business at this location until 1969, when it was sold by Brewer's grandson, William Jr., to Speed Shop Auto Parts. Speed Shop remained here for approximately six years, and then the store remained vacant until the early 1990s when the current owners, Main Street Pizza, purchased it. The northern storefront (125) was occupied in the 1920s by a real estate/insurance office, then a furniture store, menswear business and eventually Adams Grocery in the 1950s. In 1959 Adams Grocery was purchased by Brewer's Meat Market (123) to enlarge Brewer's business. The upper floor housed a printing company for many years.

127-31 N. Mill. Piccolo Bros./John Miner's Pool Room (between 1884 and 1888)

This two-story, red brick Late Victorian building originally had three storefronts. It retains most of its historic integrity on the upper floor, but has been heavily remodeled on the ground floor. The northernmost storefront (131) has a deeply recessed central front entry flanked by two modern arched windows over painted brick bulkheads. Fixed display windows line the inside walls of the recessed entry. Above the front entry door is a modern diamond-shaped transom. The storefront is clad in contemporary painted wood siding, with decorative wood columns accenting both sides of the front entry. A narrow asphalt-shingled pent-roof canopy separates the first and second stories. The two southern storefronts (127-129) are currently combined into one and have been heavily remodeled in recent years. There is a central deeply recessed front entry to this double storefront and an upstairs entry door at its north end. The central entry is flanked by vinyl six-over-six double-hung windows, three to the south side of the entry and two to the north. The entire storefront is capped with an asphalt-shingled pent roof, which includes a large central gable above the front entry flanked by a smaller one to either side. Above the south end pier and low bulkheads, the entire south double storefront, as well as the façade above the pent roof up to the second-story windows, is clad in grey vinyl siding. The upper floor façade is divided into three sections by raised brick piers. Each section contains three one-over-one replacement windows set into segmental-arch-head openings with brick heads and stone impost blocks. The windows rest on a continuous stone sill that spans the front façade. Corbelled brickwork that includes stacked headers with triangular arches between them supports a brick frieze displaying narrow sunken horizontal panels. The parapet has a plain stone or concrete cap. Historic photos from the early 1900s show a tall, elaborate cornice, which has since been removed. According to Tom Morrow, owner of Peter's Hardware across the street, he recalls the cornice being removed sometime in the 1950s.

This building first appears on the 1888 Sanborn as one building, with three storefronts that are connected by interior passageways. The northernmost store (131) has a shorter footprint than the two southern

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

stores (127-129). The 131 storefront was then occupied by a grocery store, and following that a dry goods store, before becoming the home of Piccolo Bros. Fruit, Groceries and Liquors. Charles Piccolo came from southern Italy and started a fruit store in 1917 at this address. He later added some groceries and after Prohibition was repealed in 1933, he sold liquor. The Piccolo family was in business at this location until 1965, when they sold out to another liquor store owner. The southern storefronts, 127-129, were originally occupied by a dry goods store, clothing store, and grocery before becoming the home of John Miner's Pool Room and Restaurant in the early 1920s. This spot was frequented by retired men who dined and played pool and cards. In the mid-1930s the City News Stand operated from this location. In 1959 St. Louis Automotive purchased the building and "modernized" these two store fronts, as well as the interior, for their new automotive-supply store. They remained in this location for over twenty-five years.

Source: *The State Journal*, 6/21/1959.

133-37 N. Mill. Harrington House/Commercial State Bank (1881; remodeled 1912 and 1949); Charles H. Axtell and Chauncey Waterbury, contractors

This imposing three-story, corner building at the southwest corner of N. Mill and W. Saginaw streets was built in 1881 and remodeled in 1912 and again in 1949. The upper two stories retain the original Victorian style with red brick and limestone trim, and the ground floor displays transitional Moderne/International style styling. The east-facing storefront on N. Mill St. has a slightly off-center double door entry recessed in a curved-edge square-head opening. It is flanked by groupings of aluminum-trimmed display windows – one group of four on the north end and groupings of three and two aluminum-trimmed display windows on the south end. The upper portions of these windows contain interior leaded-glass signs trimmed in wood, which advertise the wares of the former ground-floor businesses. The entire ground floor is clad in limestone above a black granite base and below a stone cap.

The second and third floors of the east-facing front on N. Mill St. are divided into five bays of varying sizes by raised brick piers. The center bay in each story contains a grouping of three windows, flanked on each side by a bay containing a single window, and those by end bays each containing a grouping of two windows in each story. The front's windows, except for two broader square-head ones near the corner in the second story, have segmental-arch heads with brick caps between smooth stone impostes and rest on continuous smooth limestone sills. Paired panels outlined by raised brick decorate the narrow single-window bays between the second and third stories, and pointed arches in raised brickwork rise above the single third-story windows in those bays. In the third story simply detailed corbelled brickwork supports the frieze, now faced in smooth panels apparently intended to look like the ground story's limestone. The angled corner facing the intersection displays the same limestone and granite base and limestone-trim upper stories, with the pointed-arch motif above the third-story window and paired panels above the second-story one. The north side on W. Saginaw St. has similar but simplified finishes, but retains a single storefront, with central entry flanked by original iron columns, near the west end. This side has two other entries. The western-most entry is a half-light single wood arched door, with a transom, trimmed with stone corners. This entry probably provided access to upper-floor offices. The center store entry flanked by iron columns has half-light double doors, with margin light transoms with a single center light bordered with small colored glass lights. It is flanked by metal columns and large metal-trimmed display windows on both sides, also trimmed with colored glass margin lights. The storefront cornice is metal and the bulkhead is red brick. The eastern-most entry, within the limestone-clad Moderne-International style portion of the façade, has double doors outlined and capped by glass block windows and flanked to the east by a large glass block display window. The first-floor's north façade toward the corner also contains two additional aluminum-trimmed display windows.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

This was built as the Harrington House hotel in 1881, the same year as Holcomb's Opera House at the height of the mineral spring boom. The hotel offered rooms on the second and third floors and a dining room on the second floor, and housed retail store spaces on the ground floor. A center light well provided natural light to the inner upper-floor rooms. According to the 1888 Sanborn, the building was equipped with electric lights and stove heat, which was upgraded to steam heat by 1899. According to the 1910 Sanborn map, the Harrington House no longer occupied the building. The second floor then housed a variety of professional offices including law firms, insurance companies, doctors and the Union Telephone Company. The third floor housed the St. Louis Masonic Lodge.

In 1882 a private banking company, Harrington, Saviers & Co., moved into the corner ground level of the hotel. Seven years later the bank was chartered by the state. It was later reorganized under the name of Commercial Savings Bank. As the bank prospered, it enlarged its space on the ground floor. In 1912 they remodeled their facilities, adding newly tiled floors, three private offices, and new partitions and furnishings. The present Moderne-International style ground-story exterior probably dates from another remodeling in 1949. The bank merged with Chemical Bank in 1970 and moved to a new location at Main and Saginaw streets in 1973.

Besides the bank, the ground floor housed a variety of stores over the years. Some of the earliest occupants included a boot and shoe store, a druggist and a jeweler. Some became long-term tenants, such as the W. T. Green Jewelry Store and Smalley's Ladies Ready-to-Wear Clothing. W. T. Green sold jewelry with his daughter Sarah in the building's south end for over twenty years. Smalley's Ladies Ready-to-Wear clothing store was opened in the early 1920s by Mr. and Mrs. Jessie Smalley and daughter Kathryn and remained in business until 1960, when the Commercial Bank expanded into their former quarters. Leaded glass signs still remain in the storefront window transoms advertising these businesses. In 1938 the city library was relocated from the Presbyterian Church to the first floor of the building, utilizing the West Saginaw Street entrance. It remained in this location until 1965 when it moved to a new building next to the City Hall on Saginaw Street.

When the bank moved out in 1973, local businessman Ronald Shirely purchased the building to use it as storage for his furniture business, and made plans to convert the second floor into apartments. Shirely's moved out in the late 1970s. Since then the first floor has remained mostly unused. The second story housed apartment residents until about 1999, and the Masons occupied the third story as their temple until 1993. While plumbers worked in the basement, they discovered a three-foot tall tombstone carved with the inscription "Joseph Johnson, died Sept. 8, 1862, aged 76 years and 8 months." It is not clear whether the stone marks an actual burial at this location predating the building's construction. Gratiot County Clerk Eva Smith researched county records but did not find any information because deaths were recorded only as far back as 1867.

Sources: *Lansing State Journal*, 6/28/1977; David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003); *Alma Reminder* 8/14/13.

201 N. Mill. Candyland/Good's Corner (c. 1880s, remodeled 1950s-60s)

This wooden two-story, front-gabled building is located on the northwest corner of N. Mill Street and W. Saginaw Avenue. The building has a symmetrical perhaps 1920s-30s storefront with a deeply recessed slant-sided central front entry flanked by single-light, wood-trimmed display windows on each side, atop low, red brick bulkheads. Above the storefront is a projecting wood fascia canopy, with sloping asphalt shingle roof, supported by decorative wooden "Victorian" brackets. The storefront (and canopy) wraps around the south corner and features a large display window on a red brick bulkhead. It is flanked to the

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

west by a wood decorative wood panel, which appears to be covering a former display window. The wooden building is clad in vinyl siding and displays vinyl window trim. The front gable is capped by simple vinyl-clad eaves boards. The upper front façade has three evenly spaced one-over-one windows and the exposed south side a small number of single and paired windows in the second story. A 1940s photo shows the upper front façade with a falsefront with a decorative bracketed cornice, which masked the gable roof. A later addition on the rear of the building includes a covered staircase to the upper story.

The 1878 City Directory lists Harrington & Reed, a general store, at this location. The first, 1884 Sanborn shows the present building's footprint. The building was then occupied by a drugstore, and later became a clothing store. In 1929 a popular candy store, Candyland, opened here. Originally located in the 300 west block of N. Mill St, it was moved here by owner George Tangalakis and remained in business until 1962. Later long-term occupants included Gall's Food Mart in the 1950s and Good's Corner, operated by owner Phil Good from 1967 until 1981. In the 1990s it was purchased by a church, which also bought the Gem Theater (205).

Source: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012).

203 N. Mill. Building (between 1911 and 1924) Non-contributing

The one-story, flat-roofed building is attached to the building to the south, 201, and separated by a very narrow space from 205 to the north. Clad in narrow-exposure white vinyl siding, it has only a recessed central front entry and no front windows. It is currently non-contributing due to its extensive alterations.

The Sanborns prior to 1924 show this site occupied by two narrow storefronts (possibly one building), one labeled "express and telegraph office." Sometime between 1911 and 1924 the building or buildings were removed and the current building constructed. It was originally occupied by a dry cleaning business, and then was vacant for a long time until the early 1940s when it housed Aubrey Faurot Men's Wear. Later it was occupied by a jewelry store and eventually a barber shop before being combined with the next-door business (201) sometime in the 1970s-80s.

Sources: Interviews with Phil Hansen, DDA Director for City of St. Louis, and Tom Morrow, owner of Peters Hardware.

205 N. Mill. Liberty Theater/Gem Theater (1917, remodeled 1940s-early 1950s period)

Since it was built in 1917, this two-story brick building has operated as a movie and live performance theater. The upper half of the front façade retains most of its early historic features, while the lower half retains the Moderne features of a remodeling project done sometime between the early 1940s and early 1950s. The ground-floor façade is clad in dark red enameled metal panels and has a recessed center section, which contains a modern double-door entry off-center on the north end. A small single-light poster display case is located to either side of the front entry. Above the front entry, a green and pale yellow metal neon marquee sign projects outward from the front façade. It has a broad triangular shape and includes geometric designs on each side and the letter "G" at the apex. The upper section of the marquee contains a modern changeable event sign on each side. An early 1940s photo shows a porte-cochere on the front façade where the current marquee is now located. It is unclear when the porte-cochere was removed and the enameled metal paneling and current marquee installed, but it was likely sometime between the early 1940s and early 1950s. A stone beltcourse separates the upper and lower façades. The second story is faced in brown paving brick and divided into narrow side and a broader center section by brick piers and aligns with the ground floor façade. The wider center section contains two windows and each side a single window. The windows are rectangular, one-over-one replacements with stone sills. The original white metal cornice is still intact and elaborately detailed with dentils and a

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

broad decorative bracket at each end. Directly below the cornice is a band of corbelled brickwork. The upper portion of the south side façade reveals a stucco finish over brick. Stepped parapet walls follow the sloping roof to the rear of the building, which is one story in height, with two entries, and is clad in vinyl siding.

Andrew Affelt opened the first movie theater in St. Louis in 1914 in the "Charles Building" at 217 N. Mill St., calling it the Rex Theater. In 1917 Affelt built the current theater and named it the Liberty Theater. The new theater hosted vaudeville acts and silent movies, as well as featuring local shows. A historic photo of the interior shows a tin ceiling, a stage flanked by a narrow staircase on each side, and a painted backdrop with advertisements of local businesses. In 1930 Affelt sold the theater to Earl Annett, who installed sound equipment and showed "talkies." Sometime between 1930 and 1936 the theater was renamed "The Gem." When the theater closed in 1968, the Gratiot County Players, a county community theater group, secured donations to purchase and remodel the theater for stage productions and called it "Kensington Palace." The Gratiot County Players used this space for live performances until 1996 when they moved to Alma's Strand Theater. The theater was later purchased by a church, and is still used as a live entertainment venue.

Sources: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003).

207-15 N. Mills

Brewer-Bouchev Monument Co. owns three separate buildings, formerly addressed 207-09, 211, and 213-15, which are now collectively addressed as 211.

207-09 N. Mill. Brewer-Bouchev Monument Co. (late 1990s). Non-contributing

This one-and-one-half-story grey brick and concrete block building has a symmetrical storefront with a central (now unused) entry. The entry is flanked by a pair of large aluminum-trimmed display windows on each side with low brick bulkheads. Above the entry and display windows, a striped canvas awning spans the width of the façade as well as the adjoining building (211). The upper façade is clad in vertical ribbed metal siding with a simple white metal cap. The building is non-contributing because less than fifty years old.

According to the Sanborn maps, two separate buildings occupied this space until sometime between 1900 and 1910, when a two-story building with two storefronts was constructed. Occupants in the 1920s-30s included a drug store and grocery store in 207, and the Klein Bazaar Store and a shoe repair store in 209. By 1941 both storefronts were occupied by Mitchell Furniture Co. A circa 1940s photo reveals the building as a two-story Italianate with white wood siding, a dark green elaborate cornice supported by large brackets, and four evenly spaced windows on the upper façade. It was occupied by Household Appliances by the early 1950s, then became vacant a few years later. The 1957 Sanborn shows the building still in existence, and a year later Brewer Insurance Agency and Monument became the building owner. A photograph in *The State Journal* on June 21, 1959, shows this site vacant and being used as a patio, owned and maintained by Brewer-Bouchev Monument Company. The current building was constructed in the late 1990s.

Source: *The State News* 6/21/1959.

211 N. Mill. Brewer-Bouchev Monument Co. (between 1900 and 1910, remodeled late 1950s)

The one-story grey Roman brick building with a 1958 storefront design contains the primary entrance to the Brewer-Bouchev Monument Company. It has a slanting recessed storefront with an entry on the left

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

end of the front façade. Flanking the entry on the north are three large aluminum-trimmed display windows on a low brick bulkhead. The transom area has a striped canvas awning, which spans the width of the store as well as the adjoining building to the south (207-209), also owned by Brewer-Bouchee Monument Co. A large green arched awning with the name of the business, "Brewer Bouchee Monument, Co." tops the front entry. The brick upper façade is capped by a course of rowlock bricks.

Based on historic photos and Sanborn maps, this building appears to have been built between 1900 and 1910. The 1938 Sanborn shows the addition of a separate one-story storage building in the rear that is labeled, "monument works (tile)." In 1958 this building underwent major renovation including a new facade, which according to a *The State News* article of 6/21/1959, helped to give St. Louis "a modern look." The Brewer Insurance and Monument Company was operated by four generations of the Brewer family from 1895 to 1977. Grant Brewer started the business in 1895. His son, Thomas, eventually took it over, and then his son, Maynard, managed it until 1960. Maynard's son then took it over; selling it to Harlan and Alice Bouchee in 1977, by whom the business name was changed to Brewer-Bouchee Monument Co. The company originated at this location (211) and eventually expanded north and south as the business grew. From 1958 to 1966 the business addresses were 207-211, and they were then combined as 211 in 1969.

Source: *The State News*, 6/21/1959.

213-15. McDonald & Rehl Furniture and Undertakers/Brewer-Bouchee Monument Co. (between 1900 and 1910)

The two-story limestone-trim red brick Late Victorian building was built sometime between 1900 and 1910. Its two storefronts, which are mirror images of each other, are separated by a brick pier. The two slant-sided deeply recessed entries are at the ends of the front façade and adjoin the building's end piers. The three first-floor piers each displays mid and just-below-lintel-level stone blocks incised with floral/plant forms of the same design used at first-floor mid-level on the adjoining building at 217. Large display windows with tall transoms fill the area between the two entry doors and rest on low brick bulkheads. The entry doors are wood with $\frac{3}{4}$ glass panels, topped by transoms and painted tin ceilings. The red brick in the storefront up to a beltcourse below the second-story windows, including a soldier course capping the storefront openings and a few course above, is modern replacement brick. (The current owners report that when they purchased the building in the 1990s, the storefront was covered in wood siding. They removed the siding and sandblasted the original soft brick to remove paint. The brick deteriorated, and they replaced it in the same storefront form. The stone accent pieces were retained in place.) The upper façade is divided into four recessed one-window bays, divided by brick piers. The windows are square-head double-hung one-over-one, with transoms, and the sills and lintels are smooth-faced stone slabs. Below the window sills, a stone beltcourse spans the width of the front façade, separated in the center by a brick pier. Above the windows corbelled brickwork bands between the piers support the frieze, which contains four evenly spaced recessed elongated hexagon shapes. The parapet is capped with white metal sheeting, but a circa 1920 photograph shows an elaborate cornice that has since been removed. The upper façade is clad in red brick, which covers a slightly larger grey modified brick, as visible from the upper side wall.

The 1899 Sanborn shows this site occupied by two unattached buildings. The next map in 1910 shows the current building footprint; thus the current building was likely built between 1900 and 1910. Former occupants of 213-215 include McDonald & Rehle Furniture and Undertakers in the 1920s, and Community Hardware from 1936 to 1965. It was later occupied by Hulings Hobby House, Gambles Hardware and Gails TV & Service until it was purchased by the Brewer-Bouchee company in the 1990s in order to expand their business.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

217 N. Mill. Charles Building (late 1880s)

This two-story red brick block with limestone trim is High Victorian Gothic in style. The single storefront has a recessed slant-sided center front entry flanked by large display windows with low brick bulkheads with a white stucco finish. Brick piers also with a white stucco finish flank the storefront, each accented with square stone pieces incised with Eastlake-style floral designs at the top and center of each pier. Horizontal vinyl siding and a wood signboard for "Woody's Music" cover the area of the former transom windows. A metal bracketed cornice tops the storefront. The red brick upper front façade is dominated by a projecting white-painted bracketed metal cornice containing a central gable. Three evenly spaced elaborate finials extend above the cornice. Below the cornice is a band of white metal trim, a limestone beltcourse and corbelled brickwork formed of stacked headers, the ones in the two side bays rising to triangle-arch heads. A stone plaque centered under the gable displays the original owner's name, "Charles." The upper façade is divided into three window-wide sections. A window in the center has a low pointed-arch head and is topped with a projecting limestone cap accented with incised floral and plant designs. A square-head window to either side, with limestone cap displaying more incised plant forms, is set in a slightly recessed part of the façade, edged by the façade's outer pier on one side and the raised central area on the other that contains the central window and raised piers and pointed-arch cap that frame it. Two limestone beltcourses span the façade near the top and bottom of the windows. One-over-one replacement windows partially fill the original window openings, with the upper thirds boarded in. The rear of the building is clad in vinyl siding and there is an upper-floor entry with a wood staircase.

The original owner of this building was George Charles, who operated a drug store at this location sometime after 1888. When he died an early death in 1895 at the age of 35, his son, Carl P. Charles, studied pharmacy and took over the business. Carl continued to operate the drugstore until 1914, when he went out of business and moved to Detroit. Subsequent occupants included the community's first movie theater, a billiard hall, bakery, jewelry store, and in the 1950s it was owned by Carl's Recreation, which operated a sporting goods store until the early 1980s. It later was occupied by a billiards hall and pawn shop until the current owners, Woody's Music, purchased it in the early 1990s.

219 N. Mill. Harding Hardware/Drake Accounting (circa 1900); Non-contributing

This two-story commercial building has been heavily altered over the years with many more recent building products covering the original masonry façade. The storefront has an off-center deeply recessed front entry near the south end of the front façade flanked to the south by a single double-hung vinyl window. North of the entry is a tripartite residential-style vinyl window outlined by wood infill in a former larger storefront window. The storefront is clad in c. 1950s rock-face random-ashlar stonework. A pent roof clad with asphalt shingles separates the first and second stories and was probably added well after the masonry finish. On the upper façade, there are three evenly spaced double-hung vinyl windows located slightly off-center toward the north end of the front façade. According to a circa 1913 photo, the original windows were in the same location as these, but were taller and included transoms. The upper façade is clad in horizontal metal siding, which appears to be covering masonry due to the deep set of the windows. The former elaborate cornice has been removed. The rear façade is clad in vinyl siding with an entry door to the upstairs story, which is accessed by a covered staircase. Fronting the alley behind the building is a free-standing concrete block two-car garage. This building is currently non-contributing because of its extensive alterations, particularly the covering up of the second-story front.

Early Sanborn maps from 1884 and 1888 show this site occupied by a different building, used as a liquor and cigar store. The 1899 Sanborn map shows the current footprint and is labeled "From Plans." Thus this building likely was built shortly thereafter, circa 1900. The 1910 Sanborn map shows a hardware store at this location, and City Directories confirm that from 1921 to 1936 this building was occupied by the J. E.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

Harding Hardware Store. Subsequent occupants included Gamble Stores Auto Accessories and the Majestic Beauty Shop.

221 N. Mill. City Bakery/Sportsmen's Barbershop (early 1880s, remodeled in 1950s-60s)

This two-story, red brick building with Victorian Gothic features has its original upper floor façade and a 1950s-60s storefront. The storefront has an off-center entry on the north end of the front façade, which is flanked on the south by three single-light aluminum-trimmed display windows that span the width of the storefront. The bulkhead and two end piers are clad in rock-faced random-ashlar stone. A door to the second story is located at the south end of the front façade. Metal vertical siding and a wood signboard stating, "The Sportmen's Barber Shop," covers the transom area and extends up to the second-story windows. The upper façade has four deep-set round-arch, double-hung windows, the openings outlined by strips of raised brickwork that rise into pointed-arch heads with cut stone keystones. Bricks in a single projecting course of headers form a continuous multi-arch label molding that follows the profile of the four pointed-arch window caps directly below, and more raised strips of header bricks form three triangles above the label molding and aligned between the windows. The window sills are of smooth stone. A 1913 photo shows an ornate cornice, which no longer exists, and the plain brick frieze is now capped by a smooth stone coping. The rear façade of the building is of painted brick and there are no additions.

According to Sanborn maps from 1884 to 1910, this building was occupied by a drug store in its early years. It later housed the St. Louis Mercantile and the City Bakery. The rear of the building was damaged in a 1928 fire, which started in the adjacent building to the north (219), but apparently did little damage to this building. In the early 1950s this building was occupied by Majestic Beauty Shop, which remained in this location until 1960 when the business moved one door south to 219. This building has been utilized as a beauty and/or barber shop ever since, including the current Sportsmen's Barbershop since 1971. The upper floor was occupied by the local Odd Fellows for many years, beginning in the early 1940s.

223 N. Mill. Clark's Bakery/Friendly Tavern/Blue Shamrock Pub (1899, remodeled 1958)

This two-story Late Victorian building is the only commercial building in downtown St. Louis with a natural stone façade. The ground-floor storefront dates to the late 1950s and has a deeply recessed front entry on the north end. Two large fixed-light windows are centered to the south of the front entry. The storefront end piers and former transom area up to the second-story windows is faced in painted brick in a common bond, except for a section around and below the display windows, which is painted concrete block. A historic photo circa 1910 shows the storefront with display windows and transoms trimmed with wood and topped with a canvas awning, and an off-center front entry on the south end. The upper façade is clad in rounded, roughly coursed cobblestones in a variety of colors and sizes. Two large square-head one-over-one windows, with transoms, are centered in the upper façade, and are outlined quoin-like on the sides with painted roughly squared-off, rock-face stones. The windows have smooth painted stone lintels, capped by smooth stone pediments each with a centered rosette accent. Four beltcourses of painted rough-faced and smooth-faced stone span the upper façade and are located at the cornice line, below the frieze, at the second-story window transom level, and below the second-story windows. Rock-face quoin-like squared-off painted stones of irregular size mark the ends of the façade in the upper story and terminate in roughly rounded finials above the ends of the parapet. A triangular pediment centered in the parapet and supported at the ends by rock-face stone piers with decorative accents contains a smooth stone plaque bearing the building's construction date, "1899." There's a one-story concrete block addition on the rear of the building.

The original building at this site, the Gould Building, was one of the first brick stores in downtown St. Louis. It was named for owners Bush and Gould Grocers, who operated a grocery store at this site as

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

early as the mid-1870s. George Clark, a baker, replaced it in 1899 with the current building for his bakery. In 1912 J. D. Rumberger succeeded Clark in this building and continued to operate a bakery and café. In 1928 a fire started in the rear of the building when the baker lit a match too close to a pan of grease on the stove and it ignited. The fire spread to the rear of the two adjacent buildings, but was contained. The bakery suffered the heaviest loss to equipment and the building, and was vacated shortly after the fire. In the 1930s the building was utilized as a restaurant and bar, eventually becoming the Friendly Tavern in 1951. The owners renovated the building in 1958, which included a new storefront, and remained in business for over forty years.

Sources: *St. Louis Leader*, 9/13/1928; Gratiot County Historical & Genealogy Society Library historic photo collection.

225 N. Mill. V-Care Pharmacy (c. 1880s, remodeled late 1960s); Non-contributing

This two-story painted concrete block façade building has been heavily remodeled in recent years and retains few of its historic elements. The recessed storefront has a central front entry flanked by large display windows on low concrete block bulkheads. The side walls flanking the recessed storefront are clad in textured Roman brick. The street level is topped by a narrow asphalt-shingled pent roof, pierced by a large gable directly over the storefront itself. A door to the second story is located at the south end of the front façade. The plain concrete block upper façade features a centered modern tripartite metal window. A 1913 photo of this building shows an older red brick façade with an elaborate cornice. A one-story, concrete block addition projects from the rear of the building. The building is non-contributing because of its extensive alterations.

This building appears on the earliest Sanborn map of 1884 as a grocery store. By 1893 it becomes a jewelry store, and then in 1906 a millinery store operated by Mrs. R. C. Thorold. In 1913 Alexander T. Ross of Kalamazoo opened a crockery, chinaware and tinware business at this location and remained in business for over eighteen years. Subsequent occupants included a wallpaper and paint store, a gift shop and Gambles Auto Accessories. In the late 1960s it was remodeled for a beauty salon and remained a beauty salon for many years before becoming a pharmacy.

Source: Willard Davis Tucker, *The History of Gratiot County* (Saginaw, MI.: Press of Seemann & Peters, 1913).

227 N. Mill. Hofstetter Building (1884, remodeled in late 1950s)

The Hofstetter Building is a two-story painted brick Victorian building with a 1950s-60s design storefront. The storefront has a slanted recessed façade with an off-center entry door on the north end flanked on the south by four single fixed-light aluminum-trimmed windows that span the width of the front façade. Below the windows is a low painted Roman brick bulkhead in a stretcher bond, with a full-width built-in brick planter box. Painted brick piers mark the ends of the front façade. Separating the storefront from the upper façade is a wide band of vertical vinyl siding extending up to the second-story windows. The upper facade has four evenly spaced square-head replacement windows, topped with segmental-arch-head brick caps with stone keystones displaying incised floral details reminiscent of Christopher Dresser designs. Above the four windows the frieze is supported on four more brick segmental arches whose ends rest on cut stone impost blocks supported on corbelled brickwork. The impost blocks display more incised detail. Very low panels of corbelled brickwork span the upper facade flanking a centered stone plaque bearing the first owner's name and building date, "Hofstetter 1884." The cornice has been removed and in its place is a narrow strip of vertical vinyl siding. The north side wall steps down toward the rear with the roof slope. The rear façade has two entries, one on each story, and is clad in vinyl siding.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

George Hofstetter came to Michigan in 1869 from Germany, and worked at a bakery in Saginaw before moving to St. Louis. In 1873 he opened a combination bakery and store across the street and prospered for many years in that location. In 1884 he constructed this brick building, which was occupied in the early years by a clothing and dry goods store, a bazaar, a grocery store and a bowling alley. In the 1920s it housed Hartenburg's New York Racket Store, which was the "dime" store of its time, offering a large variety of goods. A historic image of the storefront shows ladies clothing, shovels, rakes, crockery and a striped hammock. There is no evidence that Hofstetter ever moved his bakery business to this location. In the 1950s the building was occupied by Garr Tool Company, and underwent major remodeling including a storefront renovation in 1958. Garr Tool occupied this building until the mid-1960s, when it was purchased by a sporting goods store, which remained in business there for over thirty years.

Source: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012).

229 N. Mill. Jim's Barber Shop (c. 1960, remodeled 1969); Non-contributing

This one-story, concrete block building has a shallow, narrow footprint and shares a common wall on the south side with 227. It is free-standing on the north façade. It has an off-center entry on the north end of the front façade, flanked by a single fixed-light window. Similar to 235 N. Mill St., the front facade is clad in T111 wood siding on the upper portion, with red brick veneer on the lower section and rock-face random ashlar stone piers at the ends. The brick façade transitions to concrete block on the north façade. The façade is capped by a tall pent roof clad in red asphalt shingles. The building is non-contributing because of extensive alterations.

Sanborn maps from 1884 to 1924 show a building at this site occupied over the years by a furniture store, saloon and billiards hall. Between 1925 and 1960, this site was vacant until this building was constructed and occupied by Bob's Barber Shop. The owner was Bob Neitzke, who sold the business to Jim Swartzmiller in 1969. The shop was extensively remodeled at that time.

235 N. Mill. Dr. Near Office (1975); Non-contributing

The one-story concrete block free-standing office building is located on the southwest corner of N. Mill St. and Center Ave. The front façade faces N. Mill St., and slants gently inward from south to north, with the entry set well back at the north end. The front also contains a single fixed light window. A freestanding ashlar stone veneer pier supports the upper front north corner. The front façade is clad in vertical T111 siding, with more stone piers flanking the front entry and the south front corner of the building. The front is capped by a tall pent roof that, clad with asphalt shingles, rises like a falsefront concealing a low gable roof behind. The long side elevation facing west on W. Center Ave. contains six evenly spaced single windows and is clad in rock-face random ashlar stone. A two-story addition with a shed roof is on the rear and extends south 10-15 feet past the original building. It has concrete block walls with wood shingle siding on the second floor. This building is non-contributing because less than fifty years old.

This site was formerly occupied by a two-story brick building occupied by Rennel Bros., purveyors of drugs, groceries, books, stationary and wallpaper. In 1870 W. Henry Rennels came to St. Louis and purchased the Tuttle Bros. drug business. Knowing little about the business, he engaged his druggist brother from Saginaw, S. M. Rennels, to partner with him in this new venture. They built a brick store at this location in 1872, which was the second brick building constructed downtown, and Rennels remained in business for over thirty years. The second floor was primarily occupied by Sharpsteen Photography, who operated a photography studio for many years beginning in the 1880s. The building was later

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

occupied by a series of grocery store until it was razed in the mid-1970s to construct the current office building.

Source: Willard Bigelow Collection, *Men Who Are Making St. Louis*, (1903).

301 – 05 N. Mill. Holcomb's Opera House Block/Tyroler's Department Store/Gratiot County Bank (1881, remodeled in 1912, mid-1950s and 1970s); Ronald A. Gillis, architect/builder

The Holcomb Opera House Block is a two-story painted brick building, with a rectangular footprint, and located on the northwest corner of N. Mill St. and W. Center Ave. The front-facing storefront on N. Mill St. was remodeled in the early 1970s along with the adjoining building to the north (307-315) and is divided into four sections by painted brick piers. Large, aluminum-trimmed display windows standing on rough-faced stone sills and low brick bulkheads fill each section. The deeply recessed corner front entry has a freestanding concrete block column supporting the upper front corner. Above the display windows, a modern pent-roof canopy with asphalt shingles spans the full width of the storefront extending north across the adjoining building (307-315) and partially around the southwest corner onto the W. Center Ave. façade. A plain painted composite wood signboard fills the space above the canopy up to the second-story windows. Three triple-window bays span the upper façade and are divided by painted raised brick piers. The window openings have segmental-arch heads, with painted stone keystones and corner blocks supporting the brick arches, and a common stone sill that spans the width of the front-facing façade. Each window opening contains a small six-over-six double-hung replacement windows in the lower one-third portion, with vertical vinyl siding filling the upper portion. The original building was three stories in height with an elaborate mansard roof and interior dome, which were removed in the mid-1950s due to deteriorating structure. The second story is now capped by a plain metal coping. The south-facing side façade, which fronts Center Ave., has six bays in the upper story, with the same arched brick window openings and small replacement windows as on the front façade. On the ground level next to the corner entry is a large display window with a low brick bulkhead and rough-faced stone sill, followed by three small deep-set single light display windows. There are two side entry doors near the rear of the building, and a double display window near the rear west corner. The south façade's street level is clad in vinyl siding. The interior retains some of the original tin ceiling and wood flooring.

Henry L. Holcomb came to Michigan from Granby, Connecticut, in 1860 to buy the lumbering interests of his cousin, R. G. Hillyer. The purchase included 1,600 acres of timberland. Holcomb, with these and other interests in salt manufacturing, flour milling and brick making, became one of the most influential men of his time in the community. He had a love for the theater, which led to the building of Holcomb's Opera House in 1881. This imposing 3-story building was strategically built across the street from the popular Park Hotel and Mineral Springs Bath House, in an effort to accommodate the many health-seekers of the mineral baths. The Opera House occupied the third floor and was deemed the most elegant opera house in Gratiot County at that time. It had an immense domed mansard roof topped with a cupola, and boasted what was described as the largest self-supporting wooden truss roof in the state. A broad stairway at the rear of the building led from the street to the third floor. Inside, there was a sky blue domed ceiling with an enormous chandelier displaying hundreds of crystal prisms. There was also a dress circle, orchestra, parquet, two tiers of balconies and seating for 1,500 guests. The hall was illuminated by a carbide gas system, which was a significant improvement over the commonly used kerosene lamps at the time. Holcomb is said to have created a brick manufacturing company for the purpose of building Holcomb Block and the opera house. Opening night was June 9, 1882, and the featured performance was the opera "The Galley Slave." The opera house was also used for graduation ceremonies and other community events.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

The building also housed retail stores in the ground floor and offices in the second story. One of the longest occupants was the Gratiot County Bank, which was the first bank in Gratiot County and served the area for over sixty years. It was established in 1871 by A. B. Darragh, who came to St. Louis in 1870. The bank moved to this new location in 1881 and extensively remodeled the corner bank entrance in 1912. It closed in the mid-1930s during the Great Depression. Another long term occupant on the ground floor was Tyroler's Department Store. Sigo and Henry Tyroler opened their store in 1891, and sold a variety of dry goods including cloth, thread, shoes, and ready-to-wear clothes. At the back of the store they sold groceries, and later added a mail-order service to their business. They closed their doors in 1916, and Boston Dry Goods occupied this location during the 1920s. Later this site was occupied by Seitners Dry Goods, which was owned by Morris Seitner of Saginaw. Originally from Hungary, Morris Seitner was in the dry goods business with his uncle in Saginaw for eight years before coming to St. Louis in 1894. He worked for the firm of Seitner Bros. for less than two years and then opened a dry goods business in Mt. Pleasant with his brother. He returned to St. Louis in the early 1900s and bought out the original Seitner Bros. business (located at another site) and created what was described as the largest dry goods store in Gratiot County. Seitner moved to this location in the late 1930s and remained in business until the mid-1950s.

The post office occupied the west end of the main floor beginning in 1922 when it moved from 134 N. Mill St. It remained there for thirty-five years before moving to its new building on W. Center St. in 1957. With the advent of movies, Holcomb's Opera House began a slow descent in popularity and according to the 1910 Sanborn map, it was no longer in operation. For the next forty years the former opera house was occasionally used as a dance hall and roller skating rink. By the early 1950s the sagging roof trusses began to push out the exterior brick walls, and attempts were made to shore up the walls by tying them together with iron rods. As the walls continued to weaken, the decision was made to remove the third story and domed roof. In 1956 the reconstructed building was purchased by Ron Shirely of Shirely's Furniture Showcase, who occupied the building until the mid-1980s, when current owners Sunshine Clothing and Resale purchased it.

Sources: Willard Bigelow Collection, *Men Who Are Making St. Louis* (1903); David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003).

307 N. Mill. Shirely's Furniture (early 1970s); Non-contributing

This one-story broad-fronted pole barn building was constructed in the early 1970s after a fire destroyed four buildings at this location. It has a low-pitched front gable roof, and is clad in vertical metal siding. The storefront has five bays, divided by painted brick columns, with a central single-door entry, currently not used. Large aluminum-trimmed display windows, with rough-faced stone sills, span the full width of the building with very low painted brick bulkheads. The storefront is capped with a pent roof clad with asphalt shingles that spans the full width of the front façade, also extending south across the front of 301-305 N. Mill St. Centered in the gable is a metal sign "Mill Street."

According to the Sanborn maps 1884 to 1936, this site was occupied by four separate two-story buildings addressed as 307, 309, 311, with 313-315 generally combined as one address. Early businesses at these addresses included a clothing store, grocery, general stock and the post office, which was located at 307 in 1884. Above the post office on the second floor was the "Lady's Library." Subsequent businesses included a harness shop, hardware store, millinery, agricultural implements store, dried milk warehouse and dry goods store. The oldest business at this location was D. E. Harrison's Men's Store. David E. Harrison was born in Russia in 1860 and came to St. Louis in 1887, opening a clothing business at this location with his brother Samuel as Harrison Bros. David later bought out his brother and operated the

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

business as D. E. Harrison Men's Store, selling clothing, hats, men's furnishings, and shoes until the late 1920s. Harrison was also a stockholder and director of the Gratiot County State Bank and one of the owners of the Holcomb Opera House, both located next door at 301-305. Subsequent building owners include the St. Louis Advertising Agency and Newspaper (1930s-40s) and a chiropractor. The adjacent buildings (309-315) were occupied by A. E. Branch Furniture and Undertakers (1920s), St. Louis and O'Melia Horgan Wholesalers (1930s-1940s) and Hall Motor Sales (early 1950s). In 1958 Bert Elsley purchased 307-11, and opened an IGA on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floor. The businesses at 313 and 315 remained independently operated by a variety of owners, including Gospel Gift Shop (early 1950s) and Markham's TV Repair (1950s-1960s). On January 24, 1970, a devastating fire burned through this block, completely destroying the buildings located from 307 to 315. The fire left sixty apartment dwellers homeless and the IGA and adjacent north stores in ruins. Ron Shirely, of Shirely's Furniture Showcase, who owned the corner building to the south (301-305), purchased this site and built the current pole barn structure. In an effort to unify the two storefronts for his expanded business, Shirely installed unified aluminum-trimmed display windows and the modern pent roof. Shirely's occupied both buildings until the mid-1980s, when current owners Sunshine Clothing and Resale purchased them and combined the addresses as 305.

Sources: Willard Davis Tucker, *The History of Gratiot County* (Saginaw, MI.: Press of Seemann & Peters, 1913); Willard Bigelow Collection, *Men Who Are Making St. Louis* (1903).

317 N. Mill. D-Tails (c. 1880s)

The one-story wooden building has Victorian-style elements including a front-facing centered gable projecting from a low-pitched side-gable roof, and wide overhanging eaves supported by decorative paired brackets. A round window with decorative trim is centered in the front-facing gable. Three large wood-trimmed display windows are evenly spaced on the front façade, and the single door entry is located on the south façade off a walkway in the narrow space between this and a nearby adjoining building. The exterior is clad in vinyl siding and the roof in standing-seam metal. A full-width, front-gabled addition is attached to the rear of the building, facing (west) towards the alley, and provides a back entrance.

On the 1884 Sanborn, the one-story building is L-shaped with a rear-facing projecting wing on the north side of the building. This L-shaped form remains in place until sometime between 1939 and 1957, when the L-shaped extension is removed and the current full-width wing is added to the rear of the building, creating the square footprint of the building as it exists today. In the mid-1880s to the early 1900s, this site housed an office, barber shop and millinery store. Later it was occupied by a dentist, dry goods store and then in 1950 by Lawrence Garver Shoe Repair Shop, which resided there for nearly twenty years. The addition was probably built during this time. In the 1970s, 80s and 90s, it was predominantly utilized as an office.

321 N. Mill. Humphrey & Ostrander Hardware Store/Noettling's Paint & Wallpaper/Paint Pantry (Early 1880s, remodeled 1958)

The two-story, free-standing front-gable building has a wooden front section and concrete block rear part. The building has a long, narrow footprint and a symmetrical front façade. The storefront is a 1950s-60s design, with a recessed central entry flanked by aluminum-trimmed display windows that span the width of the front façade, atop low blonde Roman brick bulkheads. A modern projecting mansard roof with asphalt shingles separates the first and second stories. The upper story has three evenly spaced one-over-one vinyl windows, and is clad in horizontal off-white color metal siding. A plain falsefront masks the front part of the building's gable-front roof. On the south façade, a covered exterior wood staircase connects to a full length second-story cantilevered walkway, which provides access to the upstairs

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

apartments. Also on the south façade, a one-story concrete block addition connects to the adjacent building (317). The current owners think this connector addition was built sometime in the 1980s, when building owner Bruce Frost purchased the adjacent building to use as a furniture restoration workshop. The two-story gable-roof rear section of the building has concrete block walls and a single-car garage door that faces west on the alley.

In the first, 1884 Sanborn map this appears as a two-story building with an exterior staircase on the south façade. It is identified as a hardware store with a tin shop in the rear of the building. In approximately 1883 Stephen Ostrander and Fred Humphrey opened a hardware store, "across the street from Park Hotel," called Humphrey & Ostrander Hardware Store. The store closed sometime after 1913. The building was later occupied by a grocery store, then Boys Clubs of America and eventually became vacant for many years. Around 1958 the Noettlings purchased the building and conducted major renovations to transform the building into a paint and wallpaper store. They eventually sold it in the mid-1970s to another home decorating company, then it was acquired by Bruce Frost in the early 1980s who operated the "Paint Pantry" at this location for nearly twenty years.

Sources: David McMacken, *A St. Louis Album* (St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012); *Crimson Tide* 5/26/1972.

W. Saginaw Avenue, from the North

214 W. Saginaw. Apartment Building/Capital Business Service (between 1911 and 1924)

This two-story, three-bay painted brick building stands on the northeast corner of W. Saginaw and the alley west of N. Mill Street. It has a recessed entry porch, entered from the east, beneath the second story at the east end of the front. The porch's front balustrade is formed of brick laid in vertical stacks and horizontal bands leaving a pattern of square openings. Raised brick piers frame the ends of the recessed porch and rise to the roofline. To the porch's west are two large single-light vinyl windows with stone sills. The upper façade has three evenly spaced vinyl one-over-one double windows with stone sills. There are two entries on the east façade, one on the northern end of the ground level and the other near the center of the facade, both providing access to ground and upper level offices and apartments. The building has a flat roof.

This building appears to have been built as an apartment building: the earliest Sanborn that shows it, 1924, labels it "F" for flat. According to city directories, this address in the 1930s offered furnished rooms, with one of the earliest occupants being Mrs. Mary Smith. Twenty years later it became a convalescent home, and in 1954 was occupied by Capitol Business Service and Union Telephone Company (later General Telephone Company). General Telephone moved out in the early 1960s and relocated to a new building on N. Mill Street, but Capital Business Service remained until the late 1970s. The building was later occupied by an insurance agency and beauty salon.

215 W. Saginaw. Barstow Doctor's Office (between 1925 and 1938)

This one-story (on raised basement) freestanding painted concrete block building is located on the south side of W. Saginaw Ave., on the southeast corner of W. Saginaw and the alley west of N. Mill St. It has a rectangular form and hip roof. The entry is located at ground level at the east end of the north-facing façade in a projecting one-story flat-roof vestibule that also contains an adjacent vertical window. The front façade contains a broad five-part double-hung central window high up in the façade above a low concrete block planter box and trellis-type structure that spans the front façade. The west side contains a

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

double and two triple double-hung windows along with low basement windows. The building has a standing seam metal roof.

Dr. William E. Barstow graduated from the University of Michigan's medical school in 1905, and moved back to his native Gratiot County to practice medicine. His office was on the second floor of the Harrington House for many years. When his son Donald finished medical school, he joined his father in his medical practice, and they built this office building sometime between 1925 and 1938. They occupied the building alone until 1956 when they began to share the space with the City Health Department. Another physician took over the space in 1970 and remained there until 1978. Since then the building has housed law offices.

Source: David McMacken, *St. Louis at 150* (St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003).

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
-

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

- 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce
Social History
Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Period of Significance

1870-1964

Significant Dates

1870
1881
1900-1910
1958, 1959

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Henry Holcomb

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ronald A. Gillis, St. Louis, architect/builder

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

Charles Axtell/Chauncey Waterbury, contractors

Karl Frederick Krauss, Jr., Lansing, architect

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The St. Louis Downtown Historic District is significant at the local level under National Register criteria A, B and C under the themes of Architecture, Commerce/Trade, Social History, and Entertainment/Recreation. St. Louis was established in 1853 at a site along the Pine River where high ground and water power potential provided a location for saw and grist mills and a town in what was then unbroken wilderness. The chance discovery of magnetic mineral springs in 1869 led to the rapid development of a mineral spa industry that brought many health-seekers and resulted in a population and building boom for the previously small settlement. Railroad connections established in the early 1870s and early 1880s further encouraged development. The downtown district contains commercial buildings dating back to the 1870s and 80s and is significant under criterion A for serving as the community's business and social center for most of its 160-year history. A number of the district's commercial buildings date from the early 1880s, when the mineral spa industry was near its height, and relate directly to the boom times associated with that industry. The district served as the community's commercial heart for most of its history until recent years, and surviving buildings housed many of the key commercial institutions. The district's buildings also housed the community's leading fraternal organizations and contained theaters that served as entertainment centers. The district also meets criterion C in that its commercial buildings illustrate a variety of architectural styles characteristic of Michigan cities whose building stock dates from the later nineteenth century to the 1950s and 60s. The Holcomb's Opera House Building possesses significance under criterion B for its association with Henry Holcomb, a key figure in the early history of downtown St. Louis. The district's period of significance begins with the approximate date of construction of the district's oldest building and extends to 1964, or fifty years ago.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

In 1853 Joseph Clapp of Sandusky, Ohio, came to the locality along the Pine River where St. Louis was soon founded looking for a place where the river could be dammed to provide good waterpower for mills. He followed an old Indian trail north from Maple Rapids to the Bethany Indian Mission, which was then located about one mile south of present day St. Louis (Tucker, p. 916). As he explored the area, he found a location on the Pine River where high ground provided a good location for a dam and a settlement (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.11). Clapp and his partner, Sylvanus Groom, built the first house in St. Louis, a log cabin located on the southern curve of the Pine River, just north of future downtown St. Louis. Because of the dense forests of pines, oaks, maples and hickory trees, and proximity to a fast-moving river, lumbering would become the primary industry for this new settlement. They gave the new village the appropriate, if uninventive, name Pine River. In 1854 Clapp's work force built a dam, millrace, and sawmill. The dam, creating a pond, spanned the river north of the future intersection of Pine and North streets, a block west of the historic district's north end, and the millrace exited the east-flowing river and flowed east and southeast back to the river northeast of the Mill/North intersection. They located the sawmill at the race's outlet east of N. Mill Street.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

In 1855 Clapp obtained a post office for the settlement and became postmaster, operating it from his cabin. That same year, he and another investor in local lands, Dr. Abram Crawford, who settled that spring, contracted Louis D. Preston, a surveyor from Lansing, to devise the first plat of the village. The 130-acre platted parcel included the site of the future St. Louis downtown and surrounding residential area. The plat was recorded in Saginaw County because Gratiot County government would not be established until one year later in 1856 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 11).

With the development of Pine River's water power, settlers began moving to this still heavily forested area to work in lumbering and create farms. In the fall of 1855 German immigrant Jacob Wilden arrived from Ohio and opened the first store in the settlement in a log cabin near the sawmill on what would become known as Main Street, located one block east of Mill, the center of today's downtown. He brought merchandise valued at \$8000, considered a large value for such a fledgling community, by ox team from Ohio (Brown, p.7). Some early deliveries of merchandise to the new settlement came up the river by canoe from Saginaw, which was thirty-five miles to the east (Tucker p. 922).

The first hotel was erected by Dr. Abram Crawford in 1856 also near the sawmill, on the southeast corner of Pine and North Streets, just northwest of the district's north end. Originally called the Crawford House, it later housed the post office and was renamed the St. Louis House when Dr. Crawford left town and sold to new owners (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.15).

In 1856 Clapp sold his entire holdings including the Pine River village plat, sawmill, lumberyard and 1,500 acres to Richard G. Hillyer, Lewis M. Clark and George W. Davis of Saginaw (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 15). This partnership also bought Wilden's store and immediately initiated improvements in the community and expanded the lumbering operations. They operated the sawmill and lumber business until 1860, then sold their holdings to Henry Holcomb, Hillyer's cousin from Connecticut. Hillyer remained on as bookkeeper for the operations (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.16). Henry Holcomb expanded his new lumbering business and when the original Clapp sawmill burned down in 1861, he built a larger sawmill on the site, and also built a grist mill nearby.

In 1859 partners Gilbert E. Pratt and Edward T. Cheesman bought property just south of the Pine River settlement and platted a new area they named St. Louis, after St. Louis, Missouri, where Gen. Charles Gratiot, for whom the county was named, had lived out his final years (Tucker, p. 921; McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.15). Cheesman's brother, Dr. John Cheesman, arrived within a year and took ownership of his brother's store, stocking it with drugs, groceries, dry goods, hardware and other useful provisions for the new settlement. A large portion of his business was with the Indians, who were still numerous at that time (Chapman, p. 613). Before long, it became clear to Dr. Cheesman that the commercial center of the settlement was developing north near the sawmill in Pine River, so the store closed. In 1865 the two settlements became one and the name Pine River was dropped and the entire village took the name St. Louis (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 16).

The lumber business thrived, with the sawmill serving local needs but most of the cut logs from the area and farther upstream being sent down the river to the mills in Saginaw and Bay City, from which the finished lumber and other wood products could be shipped to market. A chute in the St. Louis dam permitted passage of the logs and river drivers. The cleared land resulting from lumbering was found to be rich and fertile, and farming became a major economic pursuit for the residents. The growing community attracted new business owners, including grocers David Sias and James Cummins, blacksmith Leverett Tolton, general store owner Theodore Foland, cooper Richard Eaton and carriage maker Spencer Phillips (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.17). These businesses congregated near the sawmill on the riverbank, along the east-west corridor of North Street and the north-south corridor of Main Street one

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

block east of Mill. At this time the expectation was that Main Street would become the principal business street of the village. The first bridge across Pine River was constructed at Main Street, a narrow place in the river, and connected the growing downtown to northern rural Gratiot County (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 62). Main Street was also the location of the first frame schoolhouse, which was erected in 1857 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.16).

By 1865 the three largest villages in Gratiot County were Alma, with a population of 160, St. Louis, with 140, and Ithaca, with 100 people (Tucker, p. 924). Three years later, in 1868, St. Louis became the first village in Gratiot County to be incorporated, with 477 residents (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 81). The first village hall and firehouse were built in 1871 on the north side of Saginaw Avenue, between Mill and Main Streets.

In 1867 Henry Holcomb sold his properties and business interests to his nephew, Thomas H. Holcomb, and John L. Evans, retiring back to Connecticut (his retirement was short-lived; he was back in town by 1870 and soon found himself fully involved in business activities). The partnership of Holcomb & Evans established themselves as landlords, employers, and leading businessmen in the community (Tucker, p. 925).

In 1869 the first substantial commercial building, the Kress Block, was constructed downtown by Charles Kress (Tucker, p. 925). Erected on the northeast corner of Mill Street and Saginaw Avenue in the heart of current-day downtown St. Louis, the Kress Block (demolished) was a three-story wooden structure with a fifty-by-one hundred-foot footprint (Tucker, p. 925). The ground floor housed storefronts, the second floor offices and a public hall, and the third floor was occupied by the Masonic Lodge. The hall served as the primary social gathering place for the county for many years, providing a place for residents to attend lectures, church services, shows and social events.

There were two new plats added in 1867 and 1868 by S. S. Hastings and J. F. Newton, both located south of Washington Avenue (Tucker, p. 920). Hastings' small plat was located east of East Street, and Newton's forty-acre plat was also south of Washington Avenue, east of Main Street. Newton anticipated the commercial center would evolve southeast, and so he also built a two-storefront building and hotel on W. Washington Avenue (Tucker, p. 931). However, the commercial district never developed south of W. Washington Avenue and his commercial buildings eventually went out of commercial use in the 1880s. This area was later developed for residential use. In 1869 Holcomb & Evans created a new plat of eighty acres, located west of the original plat. Prior to 1902 several more plats were added in the community, ranging from five to forty acres each (Tucker, p. 931).

The first newspaper, the *St. Louis Gazette*, was published on January 8, 1869, by owner H. H. Bartram. Many downtown businesses advertised in this first edition including J. Tuger, a druggist and apothecary, the New York Store, the C. B. Kress Emporium, H. L. Harrison & Co., J. W. Tackabury, who ran a stove company at Center Avenue and Mill Street, and J. W. Wessels, who claimed to offer the largest stock of goods in Gratiot County (*St. Louis Leader*, 5/27/1937).

Magnetic Mineral Springs

In the summer of 1869 Thomas Holcomb and John Evans and several partners decided to get into the salt business by drilling for brine. They'd heard about the success of the brine salt industry in Saginaw, and thought St. Louis had potential as well. Drilling on the riverbank next to the sawmill, at 200 feet they hit water, but it wasn't a brine pool. As the water flowed from the pipe, and the investors contemplated their next drilling location, a young salesman with a crippled hand tested the water and found it resulted in

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

improvement. As other residents tested the water, they also found healing qualities, and many claimed miracles. A sample of the water was sent to a chemist, who found it contained "remedial agents equal or superior in quality and value to any mineral water in the world" (Tucker, p. 925). In addition to healing qualities, the water also had magnetic properties. Anything that was metal could be held against the water flow or the pipe and would stay in position. The investors lost interest in the salt business and began development of a new mineral water industry. The discovery of the therapeutic waters had an immense effect on St. Louis's subsequent development during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Holcomb and Evans soon constructed a crude temporary bath house near the well, piped in the healing water, and began charging the public for its use. News of the "Springs" spread quickly around the region and people seeking its healing powers traveled from far beyond Gratiot County to test them. Within two months after its discovery, nearly 200 people had visited St. Louis. The few downtown hotels, including the Crawford House, the Loder House/Exchange House and the Leonard House, were ill-equipped to handle the rush of business. Many private homes took in boarders, and rooms were rented to the many visiting health-seekers.

During the winter of 1870 there was a building boom in the community in anticipation of more visitors in the spring. Fifty new houses were built, many planned with extra rooms to accommodate visitors. New hotels were constructed within walking distance of the bath house, including the Eastman House on the southwest corner of Washington Avenue and Franklin Street and the Waterman House, on the corner of Washington Avenue and Main Street.

In the spring of 1870 Holcomb and Evans, with Henry L. Holcomb also back on the scene, replaced the original small bath house with a larger permanent one, which was 174 feet long and contained a reception hall and accommodations to provide 500 heated baths a day (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 5). Standing near the river bank, it was connected to a spring house built over the pipe by a wooden footbridge along the river past a flour mill that spanned the millrace near the river. In time the grounds were landscaped and a plank walkway was constructed to Mill Street for easy access to and from downtown stores and hotels. The location of the bath house and connecting walkway east of Mill Street and north of West Center played a key role in shifting the commercial center from Main Street to Mill Street.

In an article published in the *St. Louis Gazette* in April 1870, a correspondent wrote, "The village is now as it has been all winter, full of invalids from all parts of the country, and every day we witness some remarkable cures affected by this strange water" (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 6). Notable early visitors included detective Allan Pinkerton, Salmon P. Chase, then chief justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, and Civil War generals Joseph Hooker and (the notorious) Daniel Sickles.

By June 1870 stagecoaches were arriving twice a week from Saginaw and St. Johns, bringing health seekers from a distance. The nearly impassable road between St. Louis and Saginaw led to the construction of a plank road between the two, which enhanced stagecoach travel dramatically. By June of 1870 there were 300 invalids in town, staying at the overflowing hotels and boarding houses (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 9). The building boom continued as investors and business owners purchased downtown lots in order to construct stores, hotels and restaurants (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 11).

As popularity of the Springs grew, demand grew for a railroad connection. St. Louis was anxious to be connected by rail to Saginaw, which had railroad connections with Detroit, Chicago, and the East, and offered a generous donation to construct it. After sufficient funds were secured and a survey conducted, the construction of the railway began. In December 1871 the Saginaw Valley & St. Louis Railroad was completed (Chapman, p. 779). Horse-drawn carriages carried visitors to and from the depot to the bath

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

house and downtown hotels. The railroad not only brought more visitors to St. Louis, but also facilitated marketing local timber and farm products to Saginaw and beyond. St. Louis's population quickly rose to over 1,000 residents.

In 1877 the village built the first road bridge on Mill Street across the Pine River at Mill Street – the second crossing after that at Main Street – connecting the north-side residential area to what had by then become the principal business street of the village (Tucker, p. 933).

After nearly ten years, by the late 1870s the Springs began to lose a measure of their popularity in the face of competition from a growing number of other mineral bath spas in Michigan and elsewhere. St. Louis was something less than a cosmopolitan place. Downtown streets had plank sidewalks, but Mill Street reportedly had four inches of mud on a regular basis (*St. Louis Leader*, 6/23/1938). And St. Louis had its share of industry, including two tanneries, two elevators, a flour mill, saw and planing mills, a foundry, and a stave-and-shingle mill – much of the industry located close by the mineral springs (St. Louis Historical Society website).

But with good railroad connections and improvements aimed at visitors, the community took on new popularity as a spa destination. In 1878 the bath house was renovated and enlarged to include a new ladies' room, ladies' private parlor and general reception room (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p.19). The bath house now offered a variety of baths, including herb steam baths, Turkish baths, plunge baths and steam baths. Local boosters gave the town the nickname "The Saratoga of the West" because of the alleged resemblance to the larger and better-known eastern spa. By then St. Louis had five hotels, including the Wessels House, Commercial House, Leonard House, North White House and Eastman House (of them, the Eastman struggled to survive because of its remote location from the bath house and depot (*St. Louis Leader*, 5/19/1938)).

It was reported that in 1880 more than 100 buildings, both residential and commercial, were constructed in the village (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 21). There were numerous retail stores including five drug stores and five saloons "so nobody went dry in those days" (*St. Louis Leader*, 5/19/1938). But local businessmen saw and worked to fill visitors' demands for more high-tone accommodations and entertainment.

Another building boom in 1881 resulted in major improvements in the downtown. In September 1881 the Magnetic Springs Hotel, a first-class hotel with sanitarium, went into operation. Built facing Mill Street in front of the original bath house at mid-block on Mill's east side between Center and North avenue, the brick three-story building initially had a fifty-four by seventy-foot footprint and cost \$20,000 (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 21). It was built, owned and operated by Dr. Willis Andrews and Dr. John Combs of Indiana, who purchased the property from Henry L. Holcomb (Thomas Holcomb and John Evans had suffered financial reverses in 1873 and turned the mineral springs property back to him; H. L. Holcomb had then moved permanently back to St. Louis to better manage his properties there). The doctors charged \$15-\$18 per week and guests would receive a quality room, bath treatments and medical advice (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 24). It was soon known as the Park Hotel, because of the landscaped private park grounds developed to its immediate north.

Henry Holcomb's love for the opera prompted him to build Holcomb's Opera House that same year, directly across the street from the Park Hotel, on the west side of Mill Street where his house had been located. This imposing three-story building cost \$25,000 to build and was reported to be the most elaborate opera house in Gratiot County at the time (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 23).

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

Another prominent downtown hotel constructed in 1881 was the three-story Harrington House, built by local businessman Hiram Harrington at the southwest corner of Saginaw Avenue and Mill Street. It housed retail stores on the ground floor, a dining room on the second floor, and sleeping rooms on the second and third floors.

A third major 1881 improvement in the downtown located across the street from the Harrington House, on the east side of Mill Street, was a large commercial building constructed by hotelier Aaron Wessels. His two-story Wessels Block had four storefronts on the ground floor and offices on the second floor. It was built by architect/builder Ronald A. Gillis, who also designed and built Holcomb's Opera House and the Park Hotel.

Another factor in the new building of the early 1880s was the 1881 passage of a city ordinance that required all new buildings be constructed with brick exteriors (McMacken, *Saratoga*, p. 24). Because of this ordinance, several new brick yards were established, though most struggled to compete with Henry Holcomb's Clay Products Company, which had been in business since 1875. Holcomb used local clay and produced red and cream-colored bricks for many of the downtown buildings. During the 1881 building boom, he hauled bricks to the construction sites from his brick yard on the west side of town near Washington Avenue, now M-46 highway. Later, some of his bricks were shipped to East Lansing for the construction of buildings at Michigan State College/now Michigan State University (McMacken, *St. Louis Album*, p. 54).

In 1884 another railroad arrived in St. Louis. The Toledo, Ann Arbor & North Michigan Railroad, within the next few years running from Toledo, Ohio, northwest via Ann Arbor to Frankfort on Lake Michigan – from which railroad car ferry service across the lake gave the line connections all the way to the Pacific Northwest – further connected St. Louis from the south, east and west. The city of St. Louis pledged \$25,000 in order to ensure the railroad would pass through St. Louis, rather than neighboring Alma (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 31). However, thirteen years later, in 1897, the part of the line from St. Louis north to Ithaca was removed when the line was re-routed through neighboring Alma, bypassing St. Louis, at the instigation of Alma businessman Ammi W. Wright (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 32). This action created hard feelings between the two communities for many years.

In addition to the booming Springs tourism industry, St. Louis entrepreneurs capitalized on other local natural resources, and established businesses in wooden table manufacturing, salt, sugar and creamery production, hatcheries and milling operations. Many of these businesses were near or in the downtown area.

The St. Louis Manufacturing Company, known as "The Table Company," was founded by Cooley C. Greene and son Wayne and was located just south of the downtown between Main and Mill streets, north of the railroad (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 53). The Greenes used local ash and oak to manufacture wooden tables of all sizes, later expanding into building wood frames and supplying Grand Rapids furniture firms with cut and kiln-dried lumber.

Henry L. Holcomb expanded his entrepreneurial efforts into salt production and to the development of a sawmill and planing mill. Unfortunately, the salt business proved to be unprofitable and eventually closed (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 50). In 1891 Holcomb built a new flour mill on Mill Street's east side just north of the district and produced flour, meal and animal feed. After Holcomb's death in 1891, the mill was purchased by Felix O'Melia and stayed in business until 1945 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 54).

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

The Great Fire of 1888 occurred on the northeast corner of Saginaw Avenue and Mill Street, and was deemed the worst fire in the city's history. It destroyed city hall, the Kress Block and fifteen other commercial buildings along North Mill Street and West Saginaw Avenue (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.92). Five years later, the 1893 Sanborn Map reveals much of this corner still vacant and labeled "ruins of fire." The community slowly rebuilt. A new three-story brick city hall and fire department was erected that same year in the original location on the north side of Saginaw Avenue, between Mill and Main Streets. It also included the Department of Public Works on the east end of the building.

Up until January 1888 the downtown was lighted by kerosene lamps that were placed on top of poles (*St. Louis Leader*, 6/23/1938). That year a private group of investors including Col. John A. Elwell, Hiram Harrington and L. Saviers established an electric plant and the first electric lights were turned on in St. Louis (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 86) Eleven years later in 1899, the residents voted bonds of \$10,000 to establish their own municipal lighting plant (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 86).

In 1891 the village was incorporated as the City of St. Louis, and by the turn of the century, there were nearly 2,000 residents.

Between 1900 and 1910 at least thirteen new brick buildings were constructed in the downtown district. This building boom was probably a result of six fires that had occurred downtown, including the Great Fire of 1888. A major improvement was made downtown in 1913 when bonding for street paving was passed and seven blocks of the principal business district were paved and hitching posts removed (*Alma Record*, 8/7/1913). The newly paved streets included the core commercial district, which was the four-block section of Mill Street, from the Mill Street Bridge on the north to Washington Avenue on the south. Another change that occurred sometime in the early 1920s was the renaming of the downtown streets to include cardinal directions. Mill Street north of Washington Avenue became North Mill St. Saginaw and Center Avenues west of Main Street became West Saginaw Avenue and West Center Avenue and to the east became East Saginaw Avenue and East Center Avenue.

The early years of the twentieth century brought additional businesses that related to the area's agriculture but also represented a change toward manufacturing that evolved away from natural resources towards industrial products such as automotive, manufactured housing and chemical production. In 1902 the St. Louis Sugar Company was established to produce beet sugar, which was developing into a major crop in Gratiot County. With the assistance of the Holland Sugar Company a factory was constructed in 1903 on the east side of town near downtown and the Pine River. The company operated successfully in the community for over fifty years (*St. Louis Leader*, 7/9/1953).

In 1915 the St. Louis Co-operative Creamery was established by a group of local investors in the vacant woolen mill building, just north of the flour mill on the east side of Mill Street. Cream brought in from area farmers was processed into butter and marketed as "Golden Lily" products (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 126). The Co-op grew and diversified into powdered milk and poultry production and eventually sold its operations to McDonald Dairy Company in 1952 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 126).

Before becoming owners of the Park Hotel in the 1940s, Walt and Grant Hess, a father and son partnership, owned and operated a chicken hatchery called St. Louis Hatchery. Walt Hess started the hatchery in 1921, establishing it on forty acres on the east side of St. Louis near the Pine River (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 107). Their business thrived for many years, eventually supplying the Park Hotel with their product for the hotel's popular duckling dinners in the 1940s and 1950s.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

St. Louis' central location in the Lower Peninsula played a major role in this transition. As roads improved and the state highway system developed, St. Louis found itself near major highways and was easily accessible from all points in Michigan (*Lansing State Journal*, 8/1/1987). Bollstrom Motors Company was one of the earliest non-agricultural businesses established and began manufacturing trucks in 1919 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 99). It operated for a few years before going out of business. Utilizing Bollstrom's empty manufacturing plant on Michigan Avenue, west of downtown, Par-Kar Coach Company began operations in 1922 and manufactured buses (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 100). This company was also short lived and the building remained vacant until 1954 when the Detroit Mobile Home Corporation moved in. The mobile home manufacturer had more success and by the mid-1970s had more than 2,000 employees. It became one of the largest mobile home manufacturers in the country. Michigan had a substantial mobile home manufacturing industry, with additional producers as close as nearby Alma, but, like other Michigan-based manufacturers who moved production elsewhere claiming a poor business climate in the state, the local factory eventually closed when the company relocated its production facilities outside of Michigan (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 102).

In 1935 the Michigan Chemical Corporation came to St. Louis and occupied the former site of Holcomb's salt production plant and began producing a variety of chemicals including the powerful insecticide, DDT. The plant grew quickly into a complex of buildings and became the major employer in St. Louis for many years (*St. Louis Leader*, 7/9/1953). In the 1960s it was bought by Velsicol, who began producing PBB, a fire-retardant chemical compound. In the early 1970s this chemical was mistakenly mixed with cattle feed, which led to widespread contamination of cattle throughout Michigan. This disaster led to the closing of the plant in the early 1980s and the loss of the largest employer at that time in St. Louis (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 122). This tragic event not only had a major impact on the local economy, but also led to the discovery of widespread contamination of the manufacturing site and Pine River as a result of long-term chemical production. With the involvement of the EPA and DNR, the site was cleaned up and continues to be monitored today with the assistance of a local task force.

In the early 1950s community leaders were planning St. Louis' centennial celebration and were looking for a major municipal project to commemorate it. Someone suggested a municipal pool, and the project quickly gained momentum. Property for the site, which was located in the east 400 block of N. Mill Street, just northeast of the district, was donated by Park Hotel owners Walt and Grant Hess. The site was adjacent to the Park Hotel, and previously occupied by the O'Melia Flour Mill. This gifted property, along with a donation of \$25,000 from the W. T. Morris Foundation and matching funds from the city, allowed the municipal pool to be constructed. It was completed in 1953 and dedicated as part of the W. T. Morris Memorial Park (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 90). It is still in existence today.

Also as part of the centennial celebration, a group of St. Louis citizens began working on documenting St. Louis' longstanding claim to be at the geographical center of Michigan's Lower Peninsula – "The Middle of the Mitten." With the assistance of Professor Robert Clack of Alma College, the group was able to prove to the State Highway Department that St. Louis was the geographical center. In 1955 a state-sponsored sign was installed and unveiled with a public celebration in Clapp Park near M-46 (near but not in the district). A granite monument replaced the sign in 1962 (McMacken, *St. Louis Album*, p. 72).

The late 1950s and early 1960s brought many "modernization" improvements to downtown St. Louis. City officials and the Trade Association, which later became the Chamber of Commerce, created a task force to address the numerous "old eyesore buildings" (*Lansing State Journal*, 6/21/1959). The task force was called The Mill Street Improvement Project and was chaired by downtown business owner Maynard Brewer. The task force hired Lansing architect Karl Krauss, Jr. to provide direction for new storefront designs, building additions and a possible shopping mall system. At least ten buildings received

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

“facelifts” and four buildings were razed and replaced with new ones. Downtown storefront renovations from this general time period survive at 107-09, 113, 121, 134-36, 211, 219, 221, 223, 227, and 321 N. Mill, and at least some of these are likely products of this 1958-59 modernization program. Improvements were also made to N. Mill Street, which was widened, repaved, and provided with angle parking and meters (*Lansing State Journal*, 6/21/1959).

The 200 and 300 blocks on the east side of N. Mill Street changed drastically in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the existing buildings were razed or burned and replaced with new ones. The landmark Park Hotel, located on the street’s east side in the 300 block, was razed in 1968 after years of declining viability and an IGA Store constructed on the site in 1978. Today this now vacant building is owned by the City of St. Louis, and is being renovated to become the future city hall. The 1888 Thayer Drug Building, located at the northeast corner of N. Mill Street and W. Saginaw Avenue, was destroyed by fire in 1971. A corner grocery store was constructed at the site in 1973. The only historic building remaining on the east 200 block is at 210 N. Mill Street, River Rock Bar & Grill. Constructed in the 1920s, this building has been extensively remodeled and retains very little historic integrity. The Office of Human Services Building at 232 N. Mill Street is the newest building on this block and was constructed around 2010.

Commerce

By the 1870s N. Mill Street became St. Louis’s commercial center, and it remains a prime commercial location within the community today. The discovery of the Magnetic Mineral Springs in 1869 had a major impact on the development of St. Louis and the North Mill business district. Almost overnight, this sleepy logging town became a thriving tourist community, with businesses sprouting up downtown to accommodate the influx of visitors and new residents. This welcomed prosperity brought many new commercial buildings, hotels, and entertainment venues. More than a dozen commercial buildings constructed during the heyday of the spa era (1870s-1900), some related directly to it, are still in existence today.

The district’s two oldest documented surviving buildings are the Harrington Block (also referred to as the D&C Store/Ben Franklin Store) at 134-136 N. Mill Street, and the E. C. Phillips/T. Jefferson Hoxie Building at 119 N. Mill Street. Both were constructed in the 1870s. The Harrington Block, according to the 1878 city directory, housed H. Harrington & Company, a dry goods and general merchandise store. Over the years it predominantly housed a series of variety stores including Ben Franklin, D & C Store and the current St. Louis Variety Store. The Phillips/Jefferson building was the original location of the Harrington, Saviers & Company Bank, which was a private bank established in 1874. The building later served as an office for insurance and real estate agent and attorney T. Jefferson Hoxie, who occupied it for over thirty years 1942–78.

The district’s buildings include several housing long-standing downtown businesses. One such long-time business is the Brewer-Bouchey Monument Company. Located at its original location at 211 N. Mill Street, this cemetery monument firm was started in 1895 by Grant Brewer and was operated by four generations of the Brewer family until 1977. At that time it was sold to Harlan and Alice Bouchey, and the business name changed to Brewer-Bouchey Monument Company. As the business grew over the years, the Brewers expanded north and south to include 207-209 and 213-215 N. Mill. Today the Bouchey family continues to serve the central Michigan area from this downtown location.

Another long-standing downtown business operation is the series of hardware stores housed in Wessels Block at 126-132 N. Mill from 1881 to the present. The two-story brick building was constructed in 1881

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

by businessman Aaron Wessels to house his Scriver & Wessels Hardware business. This operated until 1893, when it was sold and became St. Louis Hardware. It remained in business for over twenty years, then became Fred Himes' hardware store. In the early 1950s Himes sold the business and building to Max and Ruth Peters and it became and remains the Peters Hardware, operated by nephew Tom Morrow.

Hotels

Besides Crawford House, the first hotel in St. Louis, two other hotels predated the discovery of the Springs, including the Loder House (later called Exchange House and Commercial House), and the Leonard House (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 23). All three of these hotels were built in the mid-1860s and not only survived but thrived for many years because of their close proximity to downtown and the Springs.

Between 1870 and 1887 St. Louis boasted five hotels located in or near the growing downtown district and in close proximity to the Springs and bath house. These hotels included the Wessels House, built by local businessman Aaron Wessels, Paige House built by Narcissa Paige, Harrington House, built by Hiram Harrington, Eastman House built by James Newton, and that most high-tone of them, the Park Hotel. The district contains the one surviving hotel building from the mineral spa era, the Harrington House, on the southwest corner of N. Mill Street and W. Saginaw Avenue.

Department and Variety Stores

Several surviving buildings in the district have served continuously to house department and/or variety stores over the years. One of the oldest surviving downtown buildings, from the 1870s, the former Harrington Block at 134-136 N. Mill, has housed a general or variety store nearly from the time it was built, beginning with the Harrington & Co. general store in the 1870s (*St. Louis Leader*, 5/19/1938). It later housed a local variety store in the 1920s, and then two chain variety stores, Ben Franklin Stores and D & C Stores, Inc. The St. Louis Variety Store purchased the building in the mid-1990s from D & C and remains there today.

The Holcomb's Opera House Building, 301-05 N. Mill, housed Tyrolers Department Store on the first floor from 1891 until 1916. They sold a variety of dry goods including cloth, thread, shoes, and ready-to-wear clothes and also sold groceries. They were followed by Boston Dry Goods during the 1920s and by Seitners Dry Goods from the late 1930s for over twenty years. In the mid-1950s the building was purchased by Ron Shirely and became Shirely's Furniture Store for nearly thirty years before being purchased in the mid-1980s by current owner, Sunshine Clothing and Resale Store.

The Colonial Theater Block at 101-105 N. Mill St. was occupied by family-owned department stores from the early 1920s to the mid-1990s. Young's Department Store, which sold ladies clothing including dresses, lingerie and coats, was there in the 1920s and eventually expanded into the upper story when the Colonial Theater closed. The store was sold in 1950 to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bennett, who renamed it Bennett's Department Store, and added men's and children's clothing as well as baby goods. The Bennetts then sold out to the McKims in 1974, who continued to operate the business as a department store for nearly twenty years.

Banks

The first two banks in St. Louis were located on the ground floors of three prominent surviving downtown buildings. The Holcomb's Opera House Building, 301-05 N. Mill, held the offices of the county's and community's first bank from 1881 to 1931. This Gratiot County State Bank was established in 1870 by A. B. Darragh and five investors from St. Johns, and was initially located on the corner of N. Mill Street and Saginaw Avenue (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 54). When Holcomb's Opera House

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

was constructed in 1881, the Gratiot County State Bank moved into the ground-level corner rooms. The bank survived several panics over the years, but could not survive the Great Depression, and closed its doors in 1931. All the depositors, including many local residents, lost their money when the bank closed (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 54).

Two other surviving buildings in the district housed another early bank. The second bank established in St. Louis was a private banking company, Harrington, Saviers & Co., founded in 1874. It initially occupied the small building still in existence at 119 N. Mill Street from 1874 to 1881, then moved in 1881 to the ground level of the newly constructed Harrington House Building, 133-137 N. Mill Street. Seven years later, the bank became a state-chartered institution and was renamed First State Bank (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 55). It was later reorganized under the name of Commercial Savings Bank. As the bank prospered, it enlarged its space on the ground floor and conducted two major remodeling projects of the building in 1912 and 1949. It continued an independent existence until 1970, when it merged with Chemical Bank. The bank under its different incarnations occupied space in the first floor of the Harrington House Block from 1881 until 1973, when as a Chemical Bank branch it moved to its current location on the corner of Main Street and Saginaw Avenue.

Upper-Story Occupants

The upper stories of various commercial buildings in the district contained the quarters of small businesses and professional offices. This is a sampling of some of the nineteenth-century upper-story occupants of existing buildings according to Sanborn Maps:

- 134-136 N. Mill - "Office" (1888, 1893 Sanborns),
- 126-132 N. Mill - "Handprinting" (1884 Sanborn), "Photography" (1888,1893 Sanborns), "Office" (1899 Sanborn)
- 122-124 N. Mill - "Printing" (1884 Sanborn), "Cigar Factory" (1888, 1893, 1899 Sanborns)
- 127-131 N. Mill - "Office" (1893,1899 Sanborns)
- 227 N. Mill - "Handprinting" (1884, 1888 Sanborns)

Two buildings in particular had a long history of upper-story occupants well into the twentieth century, the Harrington House Building at 133-137 N. Mill and the Harrington Block at 134-136 N. Mill. After the Harrington House hotel closed, sometime between 1900 and 1910, the building's upper floors became office space occupied by a number of professional and business offices, many of which were long-time occupants including (dates are based on available city directories) Ralph L. Goggin, attorney (1921-51); Blaine Petit, dentist (1929-41); Kennedy Insurance Agency (1929-54); Union Telephone Company (1929-51); Alfred Fortino, attorney (1941-58); and Dan Kennedy, Justice of the Peace (1951-62). Dr. William Barstow was also an occupant on the second floor for many years until his son joined him in practice and they built a new medical office at 215 W. Saginaw Ave. sometime between 1925 and 1938. The upper floor of the Harrington Block was predominantly occupied by the offices of physicians, including those of L. A. Ludlum, dentist (1921); Dr. Aaron Wheeler (1912-29); and Dr. Bradbury Robinson, who occupied Dr. Wheeler's offices upon his death (1929-36). An old painted sign for "Dental Rooms" remains visible on the brick façade of the upper story of Wessels Block, presumably for dentist Dr. L. A. Ludlum who occupied this space in the 1920s.

Restaurants

Although there were numerous meat markets, bakeries and groceries over the years, there were few downtown restaurants outside of the hotels until the early 1920s. In the early years they were generally called cafés and were primarily located on the west side of the 100 block of Mill Street. According to the 1921 downtown business directory, three restaurants existed in this block, including Golden Front Café,

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

John Miner's Restaurant and Royal Café. Golden Front Café, located at 117 N. Mill, operated as a restaurant for many years, becoming Fuller Restaurant in the 1930s and 1940s, and Family Lunch in the 1950s. The owners of Family Lunch, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Smith, razed the building in 1959 and erected the current one-story brick building. It remains in use as a restaurant today, serving since 1976 as the China Garden. John Miner's Pool Room and Restaurant occupied 127-129 N. Mill from the early 1920s until the mid-1930s, when the City News Stand replaced it. The Royal Café operated at 105 N. Mill, which was the ground floor of the Colonial Theater Block, until the space was converted into a department store. Another restaurant in this block was Demas Café at 121 N. Mill in the 1950s.

Chains

Like other downtown business districts, St. Louis' downtown saw the development of national and regional chain store operations beginning in the 1920s. These came to include groceries, hardware/auto parts stores, and variety stores. Chain stores that served as significant businesses occupied a number of standing district buildings over the years. One of the first chain stores was the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., or A & P, located at 123-125 N. Mill as of 1921. It moved next door to 121 in 1929, moved again to 114-116 in the 1940s, and then finally to 118 before A & P closed its downtown store in 1969. Another grocery chain, Kroger, opened at 126-132 N. Mill in the early 1930s, then moved to 118 in the 1940s. A Ben Franklin variety/crafts store was in operation at 134-136 N. Mill in the 1930s and a D & C variety store replaced it in the early 1940s and remained there until its closing in the late 1970s. Gambles Hardware opened in the 1930s at 107-109 N. Mill, and later moved to 213-215. Gambles Auto Supply, part of the same chain as Gambles Hardware, opened in the early 1950s at 219 N. Mill and moved to 225 in the 1960s. Today, there are no chain retail stores in the downtown commercial district.

Recreation and Culture

Opera Houses and Theaters

Two surviving buildings in the district were built in part for opera house or theater use. By 1875 St. Louis was a booming community with many new residents and visitors, both seeking entertainment and recreational venues, which up to this point had been very limited. The first opera house in St. Louis was built in 1876 by Henry Martin and was located at 101-05 N. Mill at the northwest corner of Washington Avenue and Mill Street (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.24). The opera house hosted road shows, operettas, comic and melodramatic plays, lectures, dances, and variety shows and also served as a public hall. This original opera house burned in 1908.

As both the town and the number of visitors grew, Martin's Opera House was quickly outdated. In 1881 Henry Holcomb, who had a love for theater and was an influential and successful entrepreneur in St. Louis, made plans to build a larger and more fully finished opera house at 301-05 N. Mill, strategically located across the street from the bath house and the Park Hotel, which was being built at the same time. Local architect and builder Ronald A. Gillis designed and constructed the building, which was deemed to be the most elegant opera house in Gratiot County at that time. The imposing three-story brick building was the largest and costliest building in St. Louis at the time (Chapman, p. 797). It housed the opera house, which seated 1,500 people, on the third floor, and boasted what was claimed to be the largest self-supporting wooden truss roof in the state. A broad stairway at the rear of the building led from the street to the third floor. Inside, a domed ceiling was sky-blue with an enormous chandelier containing hundreds of crystal prisms. There was also a dress circle, orchestra, parquet, and two tiers of balconies. Retail stores were housed on the ground floor and offices on the second floor. Holcomb's Opera House began a slow descent in popularity with the advent of motion pictures, and according to the 1910 Sanborn Map, it was no longer in operation. For the next forty years the former opera house was occasionally used as a dance hall and later as a roller skating rink. By the early 1950s the sagging roof trusses began to push out the

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

exterior brick walls, and attempts were made to shore up the walls by tying them together with iron rods (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p.25). As the walls continued to weaken, the decision was made in 1956 to remove the third story and domed roof. The building survives today as a two-story building.

In 1908, when Martin's original 1876 opera house building at 101-05 N. Mill burned down, a new Colonial Theater Building, the current building at that location, was constructed housing the Colonial Theater, seating 600, upstairs (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 26). The theater flourished until the 1920s, when motion pictures and especially "talkies" ended live entertainment, putting it out of business (McMacken, *St. Louis Album*, p. 26). For a time the former theater was then used as a gathering place for meetings and special events. When the St. Louis High School burned in 1932, the theater space became classrooms. Since then the space has served as additional retail space for the first-floor businesses.

Movie Theater

The district contains one building constructed specifically as a movie theater. The first motion pictures in St. Louis were shown outdoors in 1912, projected on the north-facing brick wall of "Dr. Wheeler's office building," located at 134-136 Mill. The popularity of motion pictures grew and in 1914 Andrew Affelt opened the first movie theater in St. Louis in the Charles Building, located at 217 N. Mill, and named it the Rex Theater (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 76). In 1917 during World War I, Affelt built the current theater at 205 Mill, naming it the Liberty Theater. The new theater hosted vaudeville acts and silent movies, as well as featuring local shows. A historic photo of the interior shows a tin ceiling, a raised stage flanked by a narrow staircase on each side, and a backdrop with advertisements of local businesses. In 1930 Affelt sold the theater to Earl Annett, who installed sound equipment and showed the first "talkies" (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 76). Sometime between 1930 and 1936 the theater was renamed "The Gem." When the theater closed in 1968, the Gratiot County Players secured donations to purchase and remodel it for stage productions and gave it another name, "Kensington Palace." The Gratiot County Players used this space for live performances until 1996 when they moved to Alma's Strand Theater. The Gem Theater was later purchased by a church organization and is still used as a live entertainment venue.

Billiards

Billiards was another popular form of recreation in downtown St. Louis, particularly between 1900 and 1924. Three billiard halls appear on the 1910 Sanborn map, and were located at 130-132 N. Mill, 122-124 N. Mill, and 229 N. Mill. Starting in 1908, George T. Clark operated the billiards hall at 122-124 N. Mill, and was still in business as of 1913 (Tucker, p. 1061). C. D. Gallant, successor to Ben Sweatland, operated billiards at 130 N. Mill St. Gallant also apparently offered duckpin bowling, a smaller variation of 10-pin bowling popular in the early 1900s. The equipment for this sport was discovered in the basement of this building in the 1980s, according to owner, Tom Morrow. The 1921 downtown business directory showed two other billiard halls in operation, including Ideal Billiards Hall at 217 N. Mill and John Miner's Pool Room and Restaurant at 127-129 N. Mill. The buildings that housed all these billiard parlors are still standing within the district.

Social History

Fraternal organizations were an active part of St. Louis' social life, as early as the 1870s. Many of these organizations met in the upper stories of downtown buildings.

The Masons may have been the first organization to be established receiving their charter on January 11, 1866, as St. Louis Lodge No. 188, F. & A. M. (Chapman, p. 796). The Masons had quarters in the now demolished Wessels Hotel Building and Kress Building before moving into the third floor of the Harrington House building, 133-37 N. Mill, still standing within the district (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*,

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

p. 129). When the hotel ceased its operations sometime between 1900 and 1910, the Masons purchased the third floor of the building. They met there for around ninety years, until 1993, when several lodges from the area were consolidated elsewhere, vacating these quarters (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 129).

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Magnetic Lodge No. 141 met every Saturday evening as early as the 1870s at the no longer standing Wessels Hotel on Main Street (Brown, p. 12). The upper story of the building at 221 N. Main, currently the Sportsmen's Barber Shop building, served as the Odd Fellows' meeting place from 1941 to 1979.

The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a fraternal organization of Civil War veterans, met on the third floor of the still standing Martin and Guff Block, 107-109 N. Mill, from at least 1884 through 1893, according to the Sanborn maps, before purchasing a building on W. Center Avenue outside the district (sold to American Legion Post 256 in 1921 when they ceased to be an active organization (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 130)).

The Knights of Pythias' St. Louis Lodge No. 49 was founded October 6, 1886 (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 132), though, according to Sanborn maps, they were meeting in a third floor space in the Martin and Guff Block at 107-109 N. Mill as early as 1884. In the 1970s the organization purchased 114-116 N. Mill and occupied the lower level and allowed the Boy Scouts to utilize the upper story. The organization still exists today; however, members gather at their homes for meetings rather than in a downtown building (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 132).

The St. Louis Boys Club was an active youth organization in the late 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. It was established by Leroy Hubble and several other local men for the purpose of providing area youth with a variety of fitness and sports activities (McMacken, *St. Louis at 150*, p. 133). According to city directories, they occupied the building at 114-116 N. Mill as early as 1958, and remained there until the early 1970s, when the organization ceased to exist.

Architecture

St. Louis's downtown commercial buildings date from the 1870s to the 1990s, and represent a variety of architectural styles. The majority of the buildings are two-story, brick, date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and represent Late Victorian and Commercial Brick architectural styles. The buildings' decorative features are primarily displayed in the corbelled brickwork, arched windows and stone lintels and sills.

The oldest documented surviving buildings are the Harrington Block at 134-136 N. Mill, and the E. C. Phillips/T. Jefferson Hoxie Building at 119 N. Mill, both constructed in the 1870s. Both have Italianate features, but are otherwise very different. The Harrington Block is a two-story brick building that displays segmental-arch-head second-story windows with projecting stone-trimmed brick heads characteristic of the style – though this building may never have had the boldly projecting bracketed cornice that was a characteristic feature of these Italianate buildings. The E. C. Phillips/T. Jefferson building is small – domestic-size – in comparison, a wooden, one-story building, with a gable in front. It has the style's arched windows and also the projecting, bracketed eaves.

Over one-third of the downtown district buildings date from the early 1880s, a key period in St. Louis' history because of the Mineral Springs-related boom. One of the downtown's landmark buildings, despite the loss of the third-floor opera house with its tall roof, is the Holcomb's Opera House Building built in 1881. The building retains its arched second-story window openings with their beefy stone-trimmed brick

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

heads, and more could be done in both stories to bring back some of the now slumbering historic character. The architect/builder was Ronald A. Gillis, who constructed other large downtown buildings at this time including the Wessels Block, 126-34 N. Mill, as well as the (demolished) Park Hotel. The Wessels Block is outstanding among the Italianate commercial buildings in St. Louis' downtown and in the broader area for its size – four bays long (the north bay now painted and its frieze faced in inappropriate modern material like 134-36 N. Mill) – for the decorative corbelled brickwork and center arch in the frieze below the roofline, and for its polychromatic brickwork – cream brick but with contrasting red brick piers, window caps, and roofline details. St. Louis' downtown would be significantly improved in historic and aesthetic character if the upper facades of 132-36 N. Mill could be restored.

Another key landmark downtown building constructed in 1881 is the Harrington House/Commercial State Bank Building located at 133-137 N. Mill. This imposing three-story, stone-trimmed red brick corner building displays arched windows, raised brickwork details, and limestone trim. The Gothic arches over the third-story windows in symmetrical locations in front and in the angled corner bay give it a High Victorian Gothic character that sets this and the two other examples in the downtown district apart from many other of Michigan's historic downtown that lack examples of the style. The building was constructed by contractors Charles H. Axtell and Chauncey Waterbury. Little research into the building trades in mid-Michigan in this time period has been done, but Charles H. Axtell, a mason by trade, was a New Jersey native who was living in Ionia County's Easton Township in the 1870s. He moved to Lansing in time to appear in that city's 1878 directory. Axtell, with then associate George C. Ayers, a carpenter, from Ronald Township, Ionia County, built the Smith & Dellenbaugh Block, 128 Kent Street, in Portland in 1880 (Portland Downtown HD national register nomination).

The Harrington House's ground story displays a granite-trimmed limestone façade resulting from 1949 renovations by long-time occupant the Commercial State Bank. This now more than sixty year old renovation represents an important aspect of the building's history and itself contributes to the building's historic character.

A second High Victorian Gothic downtown building, also constructed in the 1880s, the Charles Building at 217 N. Mill, is much smaller than the above-noted Harrington Hotel Building but jewel-like in its elaborate upper-façade masonry detailing and its bracketed and center-gabled cornice with the three finials. The middle upstairs window has a gabled pointed arch limestone cap. Among the building's many notable features are the incised floral designs in the limestone upper window hoods, pediment and ground floor piers.

A third 1880s commercial building in the district, the City Bakery/Sportsmen's Barbershop Building, 221 N. Mill, also displays Gothic arches in the tall stone-trimmed brick caps over its round-arch second-story windows. These tall caps rise above raised, paneled piers that, flanking the windows, provide part of the façade's highly sculptural, aesthetically pleasing design. The plain upper façade once sported a projecting cornice.

No. 223 N. Mill, built in 1899, is the only building in the district with a natural stone – rounded cobblestone – façade. Fieldstone buildings, as has been stated in other national register nominations, are one of the unsung glories of Michigan architecture, and this is an eye-catching example. Such fieldstone buildings are found throughout the U. S.'s northern regions subjected to glaciation and elsewhere, but Michigan seems to have a vast number of these buildings that illustrate a variety of wall construction and decoration techniques second to no place else. Widely used in many parts of the state where the glaciers left behind large deposits of fieldstone carried from points well to the north, fieldstone has been used for

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

buildings of every type including houses, churches, and public buildings, as well as commercial buildings. In this Clark Building, built by George Clark for his bakery, the upper story of this Late Victorian building is clad in smooth, rounded cobblestones laid roughly in courses. Contrasting with the rounded cobblestones that form the background in the upper façade are the squared-off smooth and rock-face blocks that form quoins marking the ends of the façade and outlining the windows and four horizontal beltcourses spanning the facade. This building is a fine example of this notable Michigan architectural genre.

Another building boom occurred from 1900 to 1920, when ten buildings in the downtown district were constructed. These buildings were located predominantly in the 100 block of N. Mill and were primarily two-story commercial-style brick buildings with double storefronts. One key building constructed during this era was the Colonial Theater Block, located at 101-105 N. Mill. This large corner building, constructed in 1908 by Henry Martin to replace his recently burned previous opera house building, is a solid-looking Commercial Brick building constructed with walls of what appears to be paving brick, larger in size than standard brick for buildings. "Commercial Brick" is an early twentieth-century "style" that, commonly used in commercial and other buildings across the country between about 1900 and the 1930s, uses the brick itself as the decoration rather than reflecting historic styles of architecture such as Gothic or Colonial that were also popular for the architecture of the day. The Colonial Theater Building's only decorative touches are a broad zone or strip containing recessed vertical panels outlined by raised brickwork across the taller part of the side elevation (a similar strip across the front has been rebuilt in plain brick) and raised brickwork giving the building's construction date, 1908, just below the center front parapet (the same feature shows in early photographs of the building, but it has been rebuilt as part of a reconstruction project for the front parapet area). Despite the changes to the uppermost part of the front façade, the building retains its overall historic character as a large-scale (for St. Louis) Commercial Brick building of simple and straightforward design.

Another example of Commercial Brick in the district is the 1917 two-story P. W. & I. F. Cole Building at 118 N. Mill. This was the first building in the downtown constructed for an automobile business, St. Louis Overland Sales and Service. The building had, according to the 1924 Sanborn, a garage with "a capacity for 36 cars, a concrete floor, iron columns, electric lights and steam heat." The brown brick upper front displays a recessed panel, with "triangular" ends, in each of its three bays, and strips of sawtooth brickwork between the piers and beneath the frieze. Remnants of the building's early use for auto-related businesses are visible today, including the overhead garage door on the rear of the building, and an interior auto elevator, which took cars up to the second floor either for display or service.

The building at 111-13 N. Mill dates from the 1900-1910 period. It is not a Commercial Brick building because its front is faced in concrete block, but the building front exemplifies a similar Arts-and-Crafts-related aesthetic in which the contrasting different shapes and sizes of the blocks, including even octagonal-footprint ones in the piers on the first floor, and the use of vertical piers and horizontal beltcourses built of contrasting block form the decoration.

The Liberty (later the Gem) Theater Building, 205 N. Mill, was built in 1917 (the theater was renamed the Gem in the early-mid-1930s). Like the Colonial Theater Building, it – at least the upper front façade – is faced in what appears to be paving brick. The upper front retains the simple Commercial Brick character of the 1917 building, with a metal cornice that complements the astylar upper façade in combining a superficially classical, dentiled treatment in the broad horizontal portion with bulky end brackets whose design is purely inventive. The colorful enameled metal panel lower façade, rebuilt at some as yet unknown time between the later 1930s and the early 1950s, displays the enameled metal panel finish, broadly V-profile projecting marquee, and bright hues commonly used in movie theater fronts during this

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

early period of modern architectural design when modernism was expressed through simplified, bold forms rather than by architectural ornament. The period of the later 1930s to the early 1950s (interrupted by World War II and materials shortages in the later 1940s) saw massive amounts of both new movie theater construction and modernizations of older theaters, with the new facades very commonly exhibiting colorful pigmented structural glass or, as in this case, enameled metal paneling. The Liberty/Gem's façade combining the no-nonsense simple Commercial Brick character of the original building with the colorful Moderne of the ground story adds a bright spot of visual drama to St. Louis' downtown streetscape.

The late 1950s and 1960s brought much storefront modernization and a few new buildings to downtown St. Louis within the district. A June 21, 1959, story in *The State Journal* reported on a modernization program then being carried out under the auspices of the city and the local Trade Association, predecessor to the Chamber of Commerce. A task force for a "Mill Street Improvement Project" headed by downtown businessman Maynard Brewer retained Lansing architect Karl F. Krauss, Jr., to provide planning and design assistance. The project envisioned modernized storefronts, new buildings and building additions, and a possible shopping center. The 1959 article notes at least ten stores were getting "facelifts." Buildings in the district that retain storefronts or significant storefront features from the general time frame of the 1950s and 60s stand at 107-09, 113, 121, 134-36, 219, 221, 223, 227, and 321 N. Mill. Of these four – 211, 223, 227, and 321 – are documented as having been renovated during the 1958-59 time period. No. 211, part of the Brewer-Bouchey Monument Co. row of storefronts, with its Roman brick face and storefront that slants gently inward to an entry at one end, is the outstanding example both for its sleek modern design and its intactness. Maynard Brewer, the Improvement Project's head, was the building and business' owner. In addition to these building renovations, one of the district's commercial buildings, 115-17 N. Mill, was constructed new in 1959. This one-story, two-storefront building complements the straightforward design of the renovated storefronts such as 211's.

This and the other work carried out in the 1958-59 period was presumably designed by the project's architect, Karl Frederick Krauss, Jr., of Lansing. Krauss, born in Lansing in 1923, received his architectural training at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1947. He served as a draftsman with Lansing-based school architecture specialists the Warren Holmes Co. in 1940-41 and 1943-46, then as draftsman-designer with St. Johns architect St. Clair Pardee in 1947-48 and with two other firms until forming his own firm, Karl Krauss, Jr., Architect, in 1953. Krauss was a partner with Al Farnsworth in Krauss & Farnsworth, Architects and Engineers, in the 1954-57 period, but then re-established his own practice in 1957. He moved to Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, in the mid-1960s for a few years, then settled in Tucson, Arizona, by 1970. Krauss' lists in the *American Architects Directory*, 1956-70 editions, of what he considered his primary work include buildings at the Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw in the 1956-64 period, a number of Lutheran and other churches, and several school buildings. For St. Louis, Krauss & Farnsworth also designed the present City Hall, built 1956-57, and Krauss a 1961-62 addition – an International Style building in its initial incarnation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

Alma Record. Alma/St. Louis, MI.

"St. Louis Happenings," August, 7, 1913.

"St. Louis Happenings," July 21, 1913.

"Reduced Fire Hazards Mean Great Savings," May 29, 1930, p. 64.

"St. Louis Happenings," March 7, 1940.

Beers, J. H. *Biographical Memoirs of Gratiot County, Michigan*. Chicago, IL:
J. H. Beers and Company, 1906.

Bigelow, Willard. *Men Who are Making St. Louis*. Clippings from Colonial
Theater Programs. St. Louis, MI: 1903-1904.

Brown, C. Exera. *Brown's Directory of St. Louis, Michigan*. East Saginaw, MI:
Rich's Job Printing Office, 1878.

Chapman, *Portrait and Biographical Album of Gratiot County, Michigan*.
Chicago, IL: Chapman Brothers, 1884.

Crimson Tide Newspaper. St. Louis High School, May 26, 1972, Vol. 35, No. 13.

"Fabulous Days of Holcomb Opera House"

"Something's Burning"

"First White Settlers Arrive in St. Louis"

"Mineral Springs Attract Many"

"Industry Reaches St. Louis"

"St. Louis Develops"

Gane, John F., ed. *American Architects Directory*. 3rd ed. NY: R. R. Bowker & Co., 1970. Pp. 509, 967.

Gittleman, Linda. "Ball of Fire: Devastating Blaze Earned Place in St. Louis
History." *Morning Sun*, January 14, 1996, p. 1.

Gratiot County Herald. Centennial Edition, August 18, 1955.

"Founder Searching For Water Power"

"Commercial Savings Bank Shows Steady Progress and Growth"

Hamp, Mrs. Robert. "Story of Growth of St. Louis is Fascinating One." *St.
Louis Leader*, December 20, 1928, p. 9, January 3, 1929, p. 1, and
January 10, 1929, p. 1.

Hayes, E. L. *Atlas of Gratiot County, Michigan*. Philadelphia, PA: Lake &
Hayes, 1889.

Hough, James. "St. Louis Business District Undergoes 'Facelifting.'" *The
State Journal*, June 21, 1959. p. 18.

"Hoxie Law Office Brochure. "St. Louis, MI: City of St. Louis, MI.

"Interview with Phil Hansen." Interviews by Nan Taylor, 10/1/13, 10/25/13,
11/4/13, 11/11/13, 12/11/13, 4/29/14, 5/1/14.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

"Interview with David McMacken." Interview by Nan Taylor, September 12, 2013.

"Interview with Tom Morrow." Interview by Nan Taylor, December 11, 2013.

"Interview with Phil Raske." Interview by Nan Taylor, April 22, 2014.

Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory*. NY: R. R. Bowker & Co., 1962. Pp 394, 533.

Lester, E. O. *Alma-St. Louis City Directory*. E. O. Lester, 1929-1930.

McMacken, David. *A St. Louis Album: A Pictorial History of St. Louis, Michigan*. St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012.

McMacken, David. *The Story of Colonel Elwell's Castle*. St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2006.

McMacken, David. *The Saratoga of the West: The Story of the Magnetic Mineral Springs and Park Hotel of St. Louis, Michigan*. St. Louis, MI: Middle of the Mitten Association, 2012.

McMacken, David. *St. Louis at 150: The Story of the Middle of the Mitten*. St. Louis, MI: Concept Communications, 2003.

Minsky, Betty Jane. "New Spirit of St. Louis." *Lansing State Journal*, August, 1, 1987.

Perry, Ellen. *100 Years: St. Louis Centennial 1853-1953*. St. Louis, MI: Centennial Committee, 1953.

Perry, Ellen. "Tombstone Lies Beneath Old Bank." *Lansing State Journal*, June 28, 1977.

Polk, R. L. *Alma/St. Louis/Ithaca City Business Directories*. Detroit, MI: R. L. Polk and Company, 1936, 1941, 1945, 1951, 1954, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1977, 1979, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1992, 1995.

Portland Downtown Historic District national register nomination. MI SHPO.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. New York, NY: Sanborn Maps of St. Louis, MI., 1884, 1888, 1893, 1899, 1910, 1924, 1938, 1957.

St. Louis Historical Society, St. Louis, MI.
Website, accessible at: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mislahs/>
Historical Photo Collection
"Know Your City First - Is Better." St. Louis business directory, January 1921.

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

St. Louis Leader, St. Louis, MI.

"Industry in St. Louis," July, 9, 1953, p. 5.

"First Newspaper Reflects St. Louis Life in 1869," May 27, 1937.

"Three St. Louis Stores Suffer A Heavy Fire Loss," September 13, 1928,
p.1.

Tucker, Willard D. *Gratiot County, Michigan: Historical, Biographical,
Statistical*. Saginaw, Michigan: Press of Seeman and Peters, 1913.

United States Of America, Bureau of the Census. Washington D.C.: Bureau of
the Census, 1910 and 1920. Electronic document. www.ancestry.com,
accessed March 13, 2014.

Vandercook, F.M. "Former Publisher Reviews Local Changes Since '70s." *St.
Louis Leader*, May 19, 1938.

Vandercook, F. M. "St. Louis Leader Has Been Constant on the Job For Last 60
Years." *St. Louis Leader*, June 23, 1938.

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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 4.95 Approx. _____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Latitude: 43° 22' 30" N to 43° 30' 0" N | Longitude: 84° 37' 30" W to 84° 30' 0" W |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The St. Louis Downtown Historic District is located in the southeast ¼ of Section 24, Town 12 North, Range 3 West, in the Pine River Plat, County of Gratiot, State of Michigan: Block 34 Lots 7 through 12,

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan

Name of Property

County and State

Block 35 Lots 7 through 12, Block 36 Lots 7 through 9 and South 31 feet 7 ¼ inches of Lot 10 and Block 39 Lots 1 through 4 and North 22 feet of Lot 5. With a combined total of approximately 4.95 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries have been drawn to include the historic commercial core of the downtown, while omitting modern commercial buildings and parking lots on the fringes of the district. On the northern end of the district along N. Mill Street, the boundary has been drawn in the middle of the 300 west block to eliminate three modern buildings. The 300 and 200 east blocks of N. Mill Street have been eliminated completely because of the modern buildings and an expansive parking lot. To the immediate west of the 200 block of N. Mill Street, east of the alley, the boundary has been drawn to include three historic buildings on W. Center Avenue and W. Saginaw Avenue, which contribute to the district. The area to the east of N. Mill Street contains a collection of modern commercial buildings and parking lots, which do not contribute to the district. The southern edge of the district is bounded by W. Washington Avenue, also known as M-46, which separates the commercial downtown from a residential area. The northeast corner of N. Mill Street and W. Washington Avenue has also been eliminated because the modern building does not contribute to the district.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Nan Taylor, Owner

organization: Taylor Preservation, LLC.

street & number: 412 E. Harris St.

city or town: Cadillac state: MI zip code: 49601

e-mail: taylorpreservation@gmail.com

telephone: 231-920-6901

date: June 25, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

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: St. Louis Downtown Historic District

City or Vicinity: St. Louis

County: Gratiot

State: MI

Photographer: Nan Taylor

Date Photographed: September 2013

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

1 of 19: Streetscape, south end of 100 block N. Mill, looking N, 101-105 at left

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0001.tif

2 of 19: Streetscape, east side of 100 block of N. Mill, looking NE, 112 at right, 122-124 at left

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0002.tif

3 of 19: Streetscape, east side of 100 block of N. Mill, looking NE, 122-124 at right, 134-136 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0003.tif

4 of 19: Streetscape, east side of 100 block of N. Mill, looking SE, 134-136 at left, 122-124 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0004.tif

5 of 19: Colonial Theater Block, 101-105 N. Mill, looking NW

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0005.tif

6 of 19: Streetscape, west side of 100 block N. Mill, looking W, 101-105 at left, 111-113 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0006.tif

7 of 19: Streetscape, west side of 100 block N. Mill, looking NW 119 at center

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

Name of Property

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0007.tif

8 of 19: Streetscape, west side of 100 block N. Mill, looking NW, 121 at left, 133-137 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0008.tif

9 of 19: Harrington House/Commercial State Bank, 133-137 N. Mill, looking SW

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0009.tif

10 of 19: Streetscape, west side of 200 block of N. Mill, looking NW, 201 at left, 213-215 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0010.tif

11 of 19: Streetscape, west side of 200 block of N. Mill, looking NW, 213-215 at left, 229 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0011.tif

12 of 19: Clark's Bakery/Friendly Tavern, 223 N. Mill, looking W

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0012.tif

13 of 19: Streetscape, west side of N. Mill, looking SW, 229 at right, 225 at left

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0013.tif

14 of 19: Charles Building, 217 N. Mill, looking W

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0014.tif

15 of 19: Streetscape of Holcomb's Opera House, 301-305 N. Mill and Shirely's Furniture, 307 N. Mill, looking NW, 301-305 at left, 307 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0015.tif

16 of 19: Streetscape of 300 block of N. Mill, looking SW, 317 at left, 321 at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0016.tif

17 of 19: Warehouse Apartments, 215 W. Center, looking SW

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0017.tif

18 of 19: Streetscape, north side of W. Saginaw, looking NE, 214 W. Saginaw at left, rear of 201 N. Mill at right

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0018.tif

19 of 19: Barstow's Doctor Office, 215 W. Saginaw, looking S

MI_Gratiot_St. Louis Downtown HD_0019.tif

Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Gratiot County, Michigan
County and State

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.).

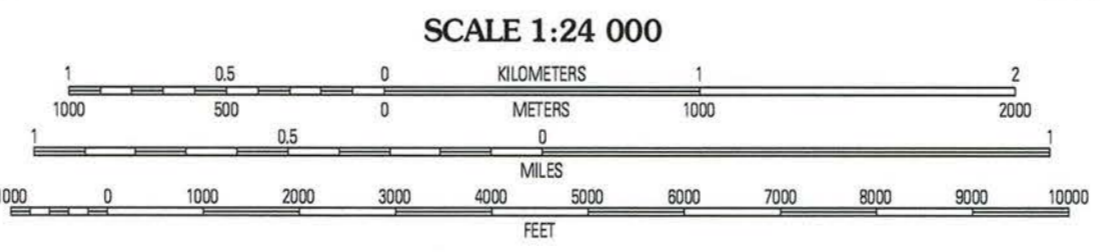
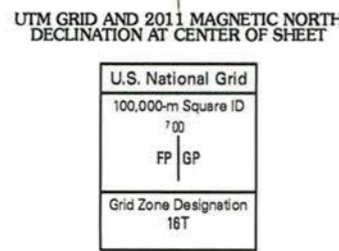
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



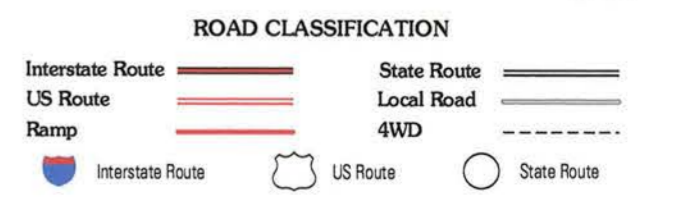
St. Louis
Downtown
HD
Gratiot
Co., MI
16, 673620
4809120

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84). Projection and
1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 16T
10 000-foot ticks: Michigan Coordinate System of 1983
(south zone)

Imagery.....NAIP, July 2009
Roads.....©2006-2010 Tele Atlas
Name.....National Hydrography Dataset, 2010
Hydrography.....National Hydrography Dataset, 2009
Contours.....National Elevation Dataset, 1999
Boundaries.....Census, IBWC, IBC, USGS, 1972 - 2010



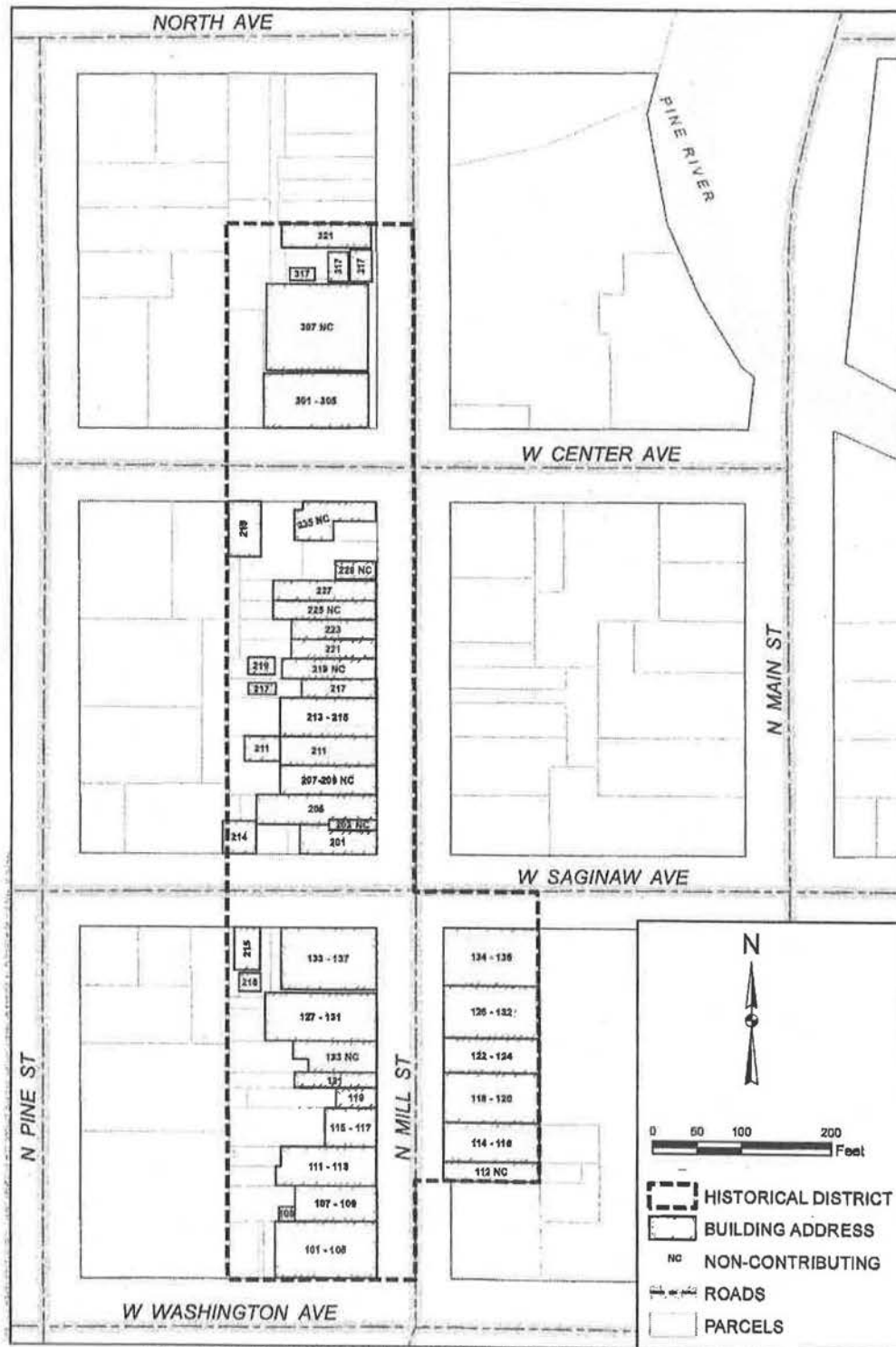
SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988
This map was produced to conform with version 0.5.10
of the USGS US Topo Product Standard.
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.5.16



ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLES

Shepherd	Pleasant Valley	Floyd
Alma North	Saint Louis	Breckenridge
Alma South	Ithaca	Rathbone

SAINT LOUIS, MI
2011



ST. LOUIS DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT
 GRATIOT COUNTY, MICHIGAN
 JUNE 25, 2014







The Fitness Place
Gym
Open 24/7

Expression
Beauty & Bouti

SEPT. RETAIL 30%

SEPT. RETAIL 30%



AAA AAA AAA AAA AAA AAA AAA AAA

ST LOUIS VARIETY

PETERS
PRO
HARDWARE

Antiques
Etc. MERCANTILE MALL
COFFEE BEANS - BOOKS - RECORDS



Antiques Etc. Mercantile Mall

Antiques
Etc. Mercantile Mall
Coffee Beans - Books - Records

Antiques
Etc. Mercantile Mall
Coffee Beans - Books - Records



ST. LOUIS VARIETY

SALE SALE



LEFT
TURN
ONLY

843

ROBIN'S FURNITURE
& MATTRESSES

ROBIN'S FURNITURE & MATTRESSES

1908

KUBIE'S FURNITURE & MATRIMONS







My PC PRO

Computer Sales & Service

989-681-8282

**VIRUS
REMOVAL**

ON-SITE NETWORKING
IN HOME REPAIRS
REMOTE ACCESS

**CUSTOM
BUILT
COMPUTERS**

Computer Repair **ASAP**

LASAGNE-CRISPER'S

MAIN STREET PIZZA

PIZZA - SALAD







JESUS CHRIST HOUSE

BLOOD FINGER MEDICINE
TUE TO WEDNESDAY OCT 2004 9 PM





1888





CHARLES

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ACCESSORIES LESSONS

**WOODY'S
MUSIC**





UPSTAIRS

The Trails
Dog & Cat
Cannabis, Pet
08581-0000







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Saint Louis Downtown Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Gratiot

DATE RECEIVED: 10/17/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/12/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/28/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/03/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000976

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12/3/2014 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Patricia Andrews

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 12/3/2014

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Christensen, Bob (MSHDA)

From: tammy denniston <wammie2@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2014 7:36 PM
To: Christensen, Bob (MSHDA)
Subject: National Register of Historic Places

I'm writing you this email in regards to the st. Louis downtown historical district stlouis Gratiot County Michigan . Our building at 301 Mill Street St Louis Michigan would be honored to be in the national Registry of historical places. I consider the building to be worthy the structure is sound and is of very importance to the town of St louis Michigan. I have owned this building for 3 years and have received numerous compliments please consider this building thank you john and Tammy Denniston



STATE OF MICHIGAN

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

WAYNE WORKMAN
ACTING-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



October 6, 2014

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed is a national register nomination form for the St. Louis Downtown Historic District in Gratiot County, Michigan. This property is being submitted for listing in the national register. All written comments concerning this nomination submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you are enclosed.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator, by phone at 517/335-2719 or email at christensenr@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway
State Historic Preservation Officer