

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUN 26 1985

date entered JUL 25 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Doctor's Building

and/or common Doctor's Building

**2. Location**

street & number 706 Church Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Nashville

N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee

code 047

county Davidson

code 037

**3. Classification**

**Category**

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

**Ownership**

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- being considered

**Status**

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Church Street Investors Inc.

street & number 461 Craighead Street

city, town Nashville

N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Davidson County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Nashville

state Tennessee 37201

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Davidson County Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission

city, town Nashville

state Tennessee 37203

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Doctor's Building is a six-story steel and masonry building located at the corner of Polk Avenue and Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee. The building was constructed in two separate stages with the first three floors completed in 1916 and the upper three floors completed in 1921. The building is entirely sheathed with ornate terra cotta and it is one of the finest examples of this type of construction in Tennessee. Designed in the late Renaissance Revival style the building is one of the best known works of the Nashville architectural firm of Dougherty and Gardner.

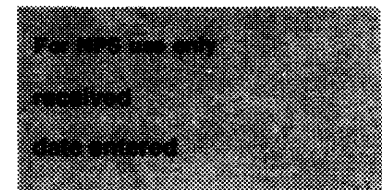
The building faces Church Street on the south, Polk Avenue on the west, an adjacent parking garage on the north and shares a party wall on the east with the neighboring Bennie-Dillon building. The building is sited on a large rectangular lot which encompasses approximately four-tenths of an acre. The main entrance and lobby of the building is oriented towards Church Street with several different shops also located on the Church Street facade.

All of the storefront bays on the Church Street facade have been altered over the past years. The storefronts originally consisted of doors with transoms and flanking plate glass windows which were separated by terra cotta pilasters. The main entrance to the building was altered ca. 1920 with the addition of Carrara glass and structural glass blocks. Over this bay is the inscription "Doctor's Building" inset in a terra cotta panel. The remaining storefronts have materials added in past decades.

The upper facade of the building is divided into six bays on the Church Street facade and seven bays on the Polk Avenue facade. Each bay of the building contains two sets of paired one-over-one sash windows. Each bay is divided by a terra cotta pilaster with Doric capitals and below each window is a decorative spandrel panel. Above the third story of the building is a large cornice which was originally the top of the building prior to the addition of the upper three floors in 1921. With the addition of the upper three floors a large cornice was added at the roofline along with a balustrade and urns.

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The entire upper six stories of the building are sheathed with glazed terra cotta. This terra cotta has a light "slip" glaze which is tan in color. The terra cotta is made of individual blocks which are fastened to each other and to the face of the building with metal anchors. The amount and variety of detailing executed in this terra cotta is an excellent example of the range and versatility available in early 20th century terra cotta design. The majority of the terra cotta design is in good condition with few areas of deterioration.

The designs on the upper facade are drawn from classical and medieval sources with over two dozen individual design elements blended together on the building. The pilasters have zig zag banding and Doric capitals on the first three stories and on the fourth and fifth floors the pilasters have garland and urn relief panels and floral motif capitals. On the sixth floor the pilasters terminate in a stylized lion's head design in the capital. The spandrel panels separating the windows have wreath and garland panels with a central fleur-de-lis design.

The cornices of the building contain a variety of classical ornamentation. The cornice above the third story displays decorative cartouches and shield emblems, bead and reel molding, dentils, modillion blocks and Greek wave molding. On the sixth story cornice are dentils, leaf molding, acanthus leaf brackets, floral and scalloped molding and medallions. Above this cornice is a balustrade with carved balusters and large urns with floral motif decoration. In addition to the cornice the corners of the building also display lion's head panels and round columns with rope and pellet molding. Altogether the terra cotta decoration on the Doctor's Building is the most varied and complex of any building in Nashville.

The interior of the building is much more restrained in its decoration. The building has a small lobby area on the first floor which contains marble floors and wainscoting. The upper floors have numerous offices which are built around a central rectangular light well. The hallways of the upper floors also display marble wainscoting and marble floors. On the upper floors are the original doors and windows of the office areas. Within the offices many alterations have occurred such as the addition of new dropped ceilings, added frame paneling, carpeting and other changes. Despite these changes the basic plan and configuration of the interior has not been altered.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1916\_1935      **Builder/Architect** Dougherty and Gardner

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Doctor's Building is located at 706 Church Street in downtown Nashville and is an architecturally and historically significant structure of the early 20th century. The building has been nominated under criteria A and C because of its architectural character, association with noted architects Dougherty and Gardner and as a center of the Nashville medical profession. The building displays the best example of a terra cotta facade in Nashville and it has not been significantly altered.

The Doctor's Building was constructed in two stages. The first three stories were completed in 1916 and an additional three stories were added in 1921. The building was constructed on the site of the Cole mansion which was one of the last remaining large residences downtown in the early 20th century. The property was purchased in 1913 by the Nashville Property Company for \$200,000 and in early 1916 the Cole mansion was demolished and work began on the construction of the Doctor's Building. Partial interest in the property was also held by the Methodist Episcopal Church South through a will agreement.

The president of the Nashville Property Company was Dr. Matthew McGannon a noted Tennessee surgeon. McGannon was a native of Canada and practiced medicine in New York before moving to Nashville in 1895. McGannon first served as professor of medicine at the University of Nashville and in 1912 he joined Vanderbilt University as professor of surgery. McGannon also served as Surgeon-General for the state of Tennessee from 1918 to 1919. In addition to his medical practice McGannon was also active in the Nashville financial community serving as Vice-President of the Tennessee-Hermitage Bank.

In the early 1900s Nashville physicians occupied offices throughout the downtown area. Several buildings were rented chiefly by doctors the most notable of which was the Eve Building which was located next to the Doctor's Building property on the present site of the Bennie-Dillon Building. McGannon appears to have planned and built the Doctor's Building to complement the adjacent Eve Building and be a

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. .4 acre

Quadrangle name Nashville, West Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	1	9	5	2	5	4	0	0	1	7	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is approximately .4 acre in size and rectangular in shape. It is bounded on the south by Church Street, on the west by Polk Avenue and on the east and north by adjacent property lines. It includes all land historically associated with the Doctor's Building.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Philip Thomason, Consultant

organization Thomason and Associates

date April 4, 1985

street & number Suite 202, 1700 Hayes Street

telephone 615-320-5732

city or town Nashville

state Tennessee 37203

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Boyer

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 5/31/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

for Melores Boyer  
Keeper of the National Register

date 7-25-85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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central location for many of Nashville's medical professionals. McGannon's long experience in medicine and finance made him especially qualified to undertake such a venture.

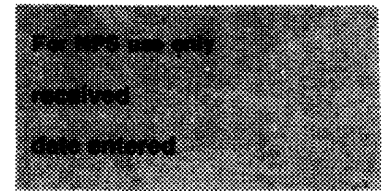
After the demolition of the Cole Building construction of the Doctor's Building began in 1916. The architects for the building was the firm of Dougherty and Gardner headed by Edwin Dougherty and Thomas Gardner of Nashville. Dougherty was one of Nashville's more noted architects in the early 20th century. He studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the early 1900s and practiced architecture in Atlanta before moving to Nashville in 1916. Dougherty's reputation was such that upon moving to Nashville he immediately secured the contract for not only the Doctor's Building but also the Belle Meade Country Clubhouse and numerous Belle Meade residences. His partner in the firm was Thomas Gardner a native of Tennessee and an architect in Nashville since 1912. The firm would later go on to design the War Memorial Building with McKim, Meade and White and other notable buildings throughout the South.

Dougherty and Gardner's design for the Doctor's Building was one of the most ornate and ambitious for any downtown building. The building was primarily a masonry and steel structure built around a large rectangular central lightwell but its most striking feature was its exterior sheathing of architectural terra cotta. Terra cotta had been widely used for exterior decoration throughout the late 19th century and new glazing techniques developed in the 1890s made it possible to create a large variety of designs in varying colors and textures. The terra cotta on the Doctor's Building is an especially fine example of "slip" glazed exterior blocks molded in many different designs.

The building was designed in the late Renaissance Revival style with the horizontality of the structure emphasized by wide belt courses and a roof balustrade. The storefront originally was composed of separate entrances in each bay with large display windows and transoms. The interior was divided into individual office areas on each floor. Interior finishes included marble floors and marble wainscoting in the halls and lobby. The main entrance was located on Church Street with a small but ornate lobby area which led to the main stairs and elevators. This lobby has

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been remodeled with a new dropped ceiling but the original marble wainscoting and floors are still extant.

The building's main distinction is derived from the extensive use of classical designs and motifs created out of terra cotta on the upper floor. Each bay is divided by a terra cotta pilaster with Doric capitals and separating the windows are ornate spandrels. Above the third and sixth stories are projecting terra cotta cornices. Applied detailing on the pilasters, cornices, spandrels and other areas include the following; Greek bands of wave molding, enriched console brackets, dentils, medallions, scallop and garland designs, bead and reel molding, stylized lion's head capitals, fleur-des-lis panels, urn and garland panels and large urns on the roof balustrade. Below the third story cornice is a shield with six balls in relief which is adapted from the Medici family coat of arms. The Medici family of 15th century Florence, Italy had the physician saints, Cosmos and Damien, as their family patron saints and the family name is a form of medico, which is Italian for doctor.

When the building opened in early 1917 it quickly became a center for the city's medical community. The building was occupied by twenty-four doctors and the Nashville Public Health Department in 1918. Among those who kept an office in the building was Dr. McGannon who had a large office on the third floor. The building was originally designed to be six stories but only the first three stories were constructed in 1916. Dr. McGannon died in 1919 and the building entered into litigation with McGannon's widow purchasing the building at a foreclosure sale in 1921. Mrs. McGannon sold her interest in the property to the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in July of 1921 and the final three floors were completed as planned that year.

The building continued to be a center of the Nashville medical profession until recent decades. In 1924 the building contained seventy-three doctors and dentists plus the offices of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the sixth floor. By 1928 the building also contained the offices of the Tennessee Medical Association. In 1926 the Bennie-Dillon Building (NR 1984) was constructed adjacent to the Doctor's Building and together they served as the main office area of Nashville's doctors and dentists. In 1931 the Doctor's Building contained 56 doctors and 15 dentists and in 1950 it contained 67 doctors and 14 dentists.

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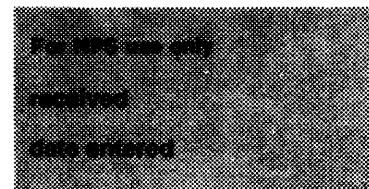
With the movement of physicians to suburbia and other parts of the city in the 1960s the building ceased to be occupied chiefly by these professions. In 1969 only 9 doctors and 5 dentists remained in the building and it gradually became the home to offices of various state agencies. Today the building is occupied by several businesses on the first floor and by state regulatory boards and the Tennessee Housing Development Agency on the upper five floors.

The Doctor's Building remains a unique architectural resource of Nashville. The exterior terra cotta decoration is the most ornate in the city and one of the most notable in Tennessee. The Renaissance design and classical ornamentation combine to create an exterior of extraordinary exuberance. The building is one of the best examples of the work of Dougherty and Gardner and was also important as a center of the Nashville medical profession during much of the 20th century. Alterations to the building have been limited to the storefront and some interior changes. The Doctor's Building still displays its original architectural character and is a significant resource of downtown Nashville.



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Bibliography

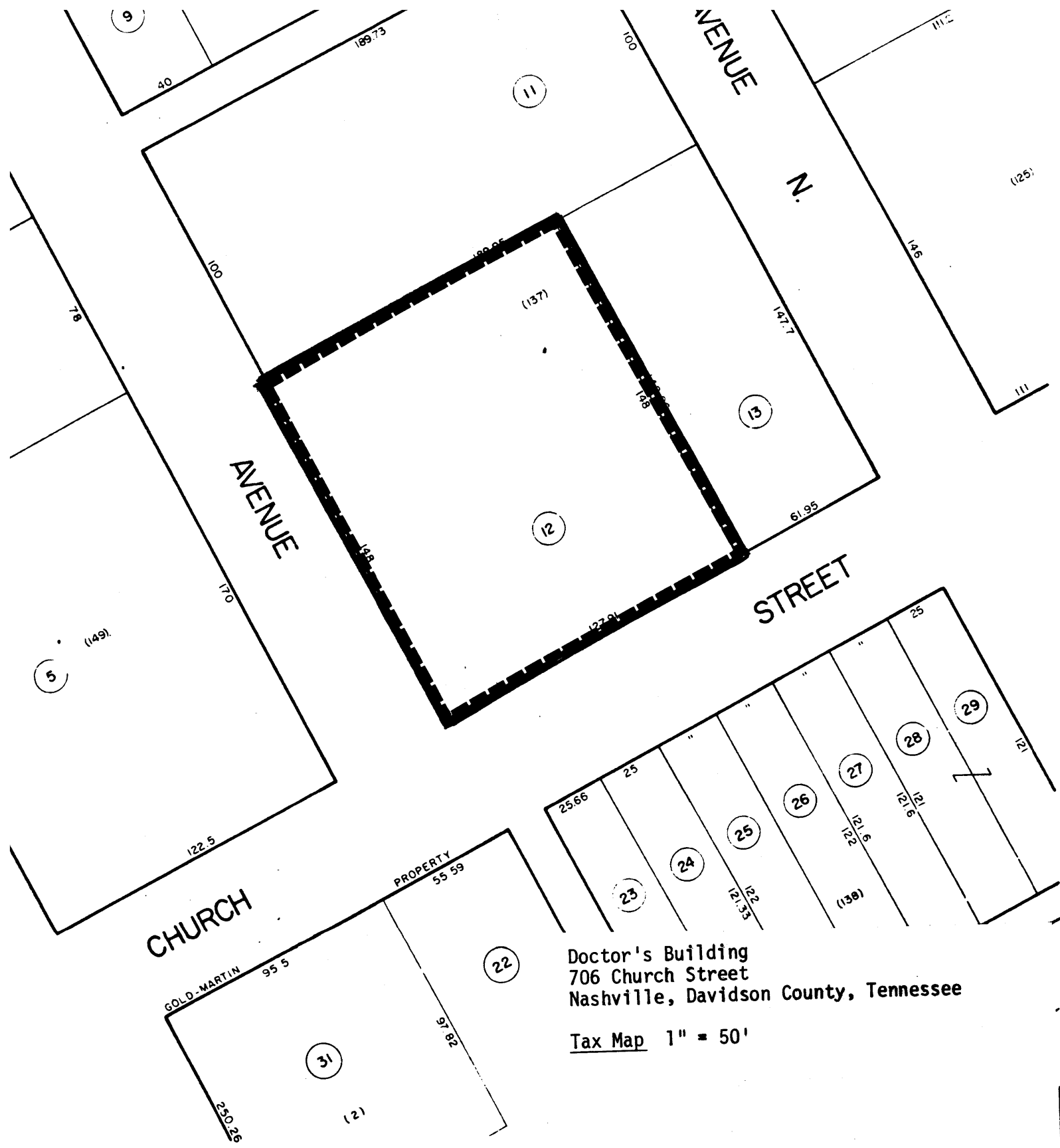
Davidson County Deed Records. 1912-1978. Davidson County Courthouse, Nashville, Tennessee.

Dougherty and Gardner Architects, Drawings of the Doctor's Building on file. Church Street Investors, Nashville, Tennessee.

Moore, John Trotwood. Tennessee - The Volunteer State, 1769-1923 Vol. IV. Nashville: S.J. Clarke Co., 1923.

Nashville American. 9 October, 1919.

Nashville City Directory. 1916-1980.



Doctor's Building  
 706 Church Street  
 Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee

Tax Map 1" = 50'

**LEGEND**

- Original lot number (62)
- Parcel Number (123)

