

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5

other name/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & town 221 S. Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Kennett N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Dunklin code 069 zip code 63857

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles November 6, 2007  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: manufacturing facility

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: vernacular industrial

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**foundation** brick

**walls** brick

**roof** other: tar and gravel

**other**

**Narrative Description**

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

**8. Description**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

**Period of Significance**

1923-1957

**Significant Dates**

1923

**Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Meiner, M., contractor

Taylor, J. W., contractor

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Public Library, Kennett, Missouri

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Name of Property

Dunklin County, MO  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

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

1 1/5 7/6/4/4/8/0 4/0/1/3/8/6/0  
Zone Easting Northing

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

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

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

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

see attached

Property Tax No.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

see attached

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cydney E. Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield

organization Architectural and Historical Research, LLC date April 30, 2007

street & number 1537 Belleview Avenue telephone 816.472.4154

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

name/title Ely-Walker Apartments, LP

street & number 221 South Main telephone 417.864.7772, ext 118

city or town Kennett state MO zip code 63857

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## Continuation Sheet

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**Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5**  
**Dunklin County, Missouri**

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### Summary Description

Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5, located at 221 South Main Street, Kennett, Dunklin County, Missouri, was constructed in 1923 (with additions in 1934, 1936 and 1937) by contractor M. Meiner, Kennett, Missouri, with assistance from J. W. Taylor, Cape Girardeau, Missouri. It appears that the design of the factory can be attributed to Louis Miller, an architect working in Arcadia, Missouri. The original three-story building, measuring 50 feet x 154 feet served as the original unit. In 1934, a one-story wing, measuring 90 feet x 220 feet was added to the south and in 1936 a similar wing, measuring 119 feet x 296 feet was added to the north. A boiler room was added to the rear of the original building in 1937. As it was originally constructed, the entire complex featured multipaned, industrial sash fenestration and multiple skylights at the north and south wings. While the three-story unit is constructed of heavy timber, the wings feature structural steel. Although the fenestration of Ely & Walker has been boarded up over the years to protect the property, the building has retained its integrity of location design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Its character defining features of the exterior and the interior are intact and representative of the period of historic significance.

### Elaboration

The main façade faces east. The original building, three stories in height, is divided into three bays. Fenestration, now boarded-up with plywood, is segmentally arched with brick sills. The main entrance, located at far north bay of the east façade, has been modified with brick. Two segmental arches appear at the crown of the entry bay and were part of the original fenestration. The two wings of the building are one-story in height and are divided into bays by brick piers and both feature multiple monitors. The industrial window units of these two additions have been covered with plywood. The building remains in good condition and possesses the majority of its historic integrity.

The recessed entrance placed at the north bay of the east facade, features a non-original aluminum and glass single-leaf door. Fenestration, boarded up at the first and second floors, is extant eight/over/eight, double-hung sash with segmental headers and brick sills. The extant third story windows, are original eight/over/eight, double-hung, sash. While the first stories of the north and south facades of the primary unit are obscured by the historic additions, the second and third story fenestration of the south and north facades is original six/over/six, double-hung, sash. The majority of units are paired, with the exception of three windows at the first and second bays, moving from the west of the north facade. The north facade features a single-leaf roof access wood door at the second bay from the west. At the west or rear facade, second and third story fenestration is original six/over/six, double-hung, sash. The majority of units are paired. The first story features two sets of paired windows and a steel fire door. The far south window unit is exposed while the remainder of the openings is infilled with brick masonry and obscured by the 1937 boiler addition.

One-story brick additions, placed at the north and south facades of the main unit, feature the original industrial steel sash window units with awning windows centered at the bottom half of the units at all facades. Windows have been boarded up and/or infilled. Openings at the far north bays of the west facade, of the south addition have been replaced with rolling overhead doors. Double-leaf non-original doors are placed at the center of the south

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**Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5**  
**Dunklin County, Missouri**

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addition and the far south bay of the north addition, main facade. Additional non-original doors are randomly placed at the secondary facades. At the west façade of the north addition, a one-story wood frame unit is non-original.

The monitor units featured at the south and north wings are configured with multipaned, industrial sash fenestration, set in groups of three. The groupings of windows are separated by wood shingles. The low-pitched gabled roof features several metal vents.

The interior of the first through third stories of the original unit feature exposed, heavy timber wood columns. The first floor is composed of concrete, while the upper floors are wood. The original first story openings, obscured by the north and south wings, have been converted to rolling fire doors and/or infilled with brick masonry. A freight elevator is placed at the northwest corner and two original wood frame stairwells are located the northeast and northwest corners of the building.

Interiors of the one-story wings feature steel beams, wood rafters, steel columns, concrete flooring (south addition), and hardwood flooring (north addition).

Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 is located at the southeast corner the Courthouse Square. The surrounding buildings are commercial and recreational in nature and mostly constructed of brick from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kennett City Hall is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

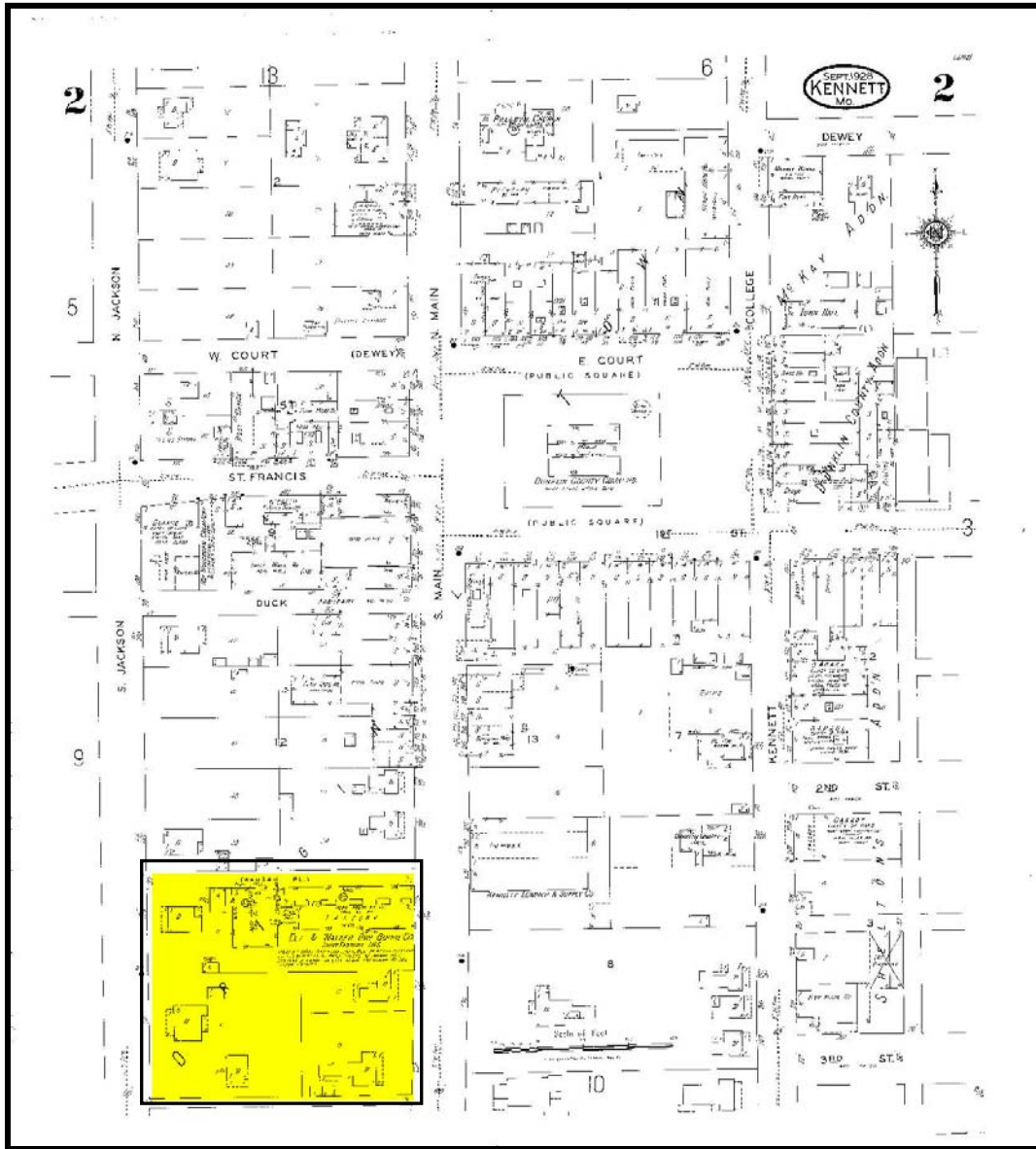
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*Sanborn Insurance Map: Kennett, Missouri, September 1928*

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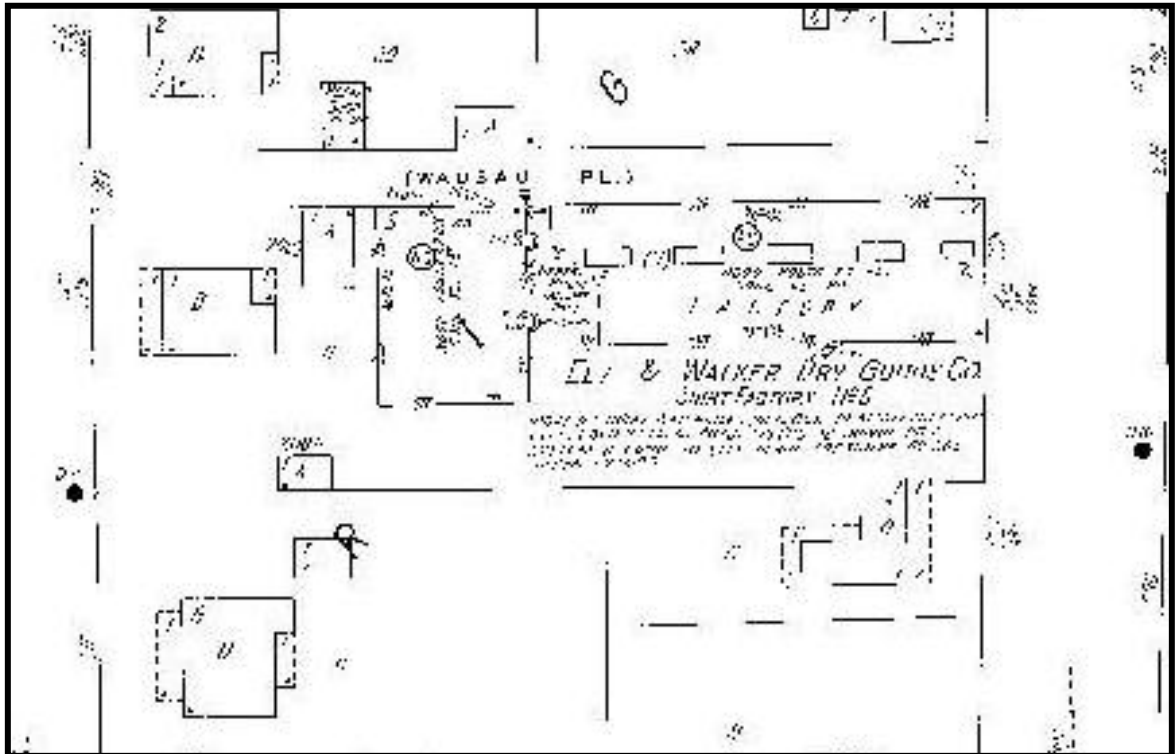
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**Dunklin County, Missouri**



*Detail from previous page*



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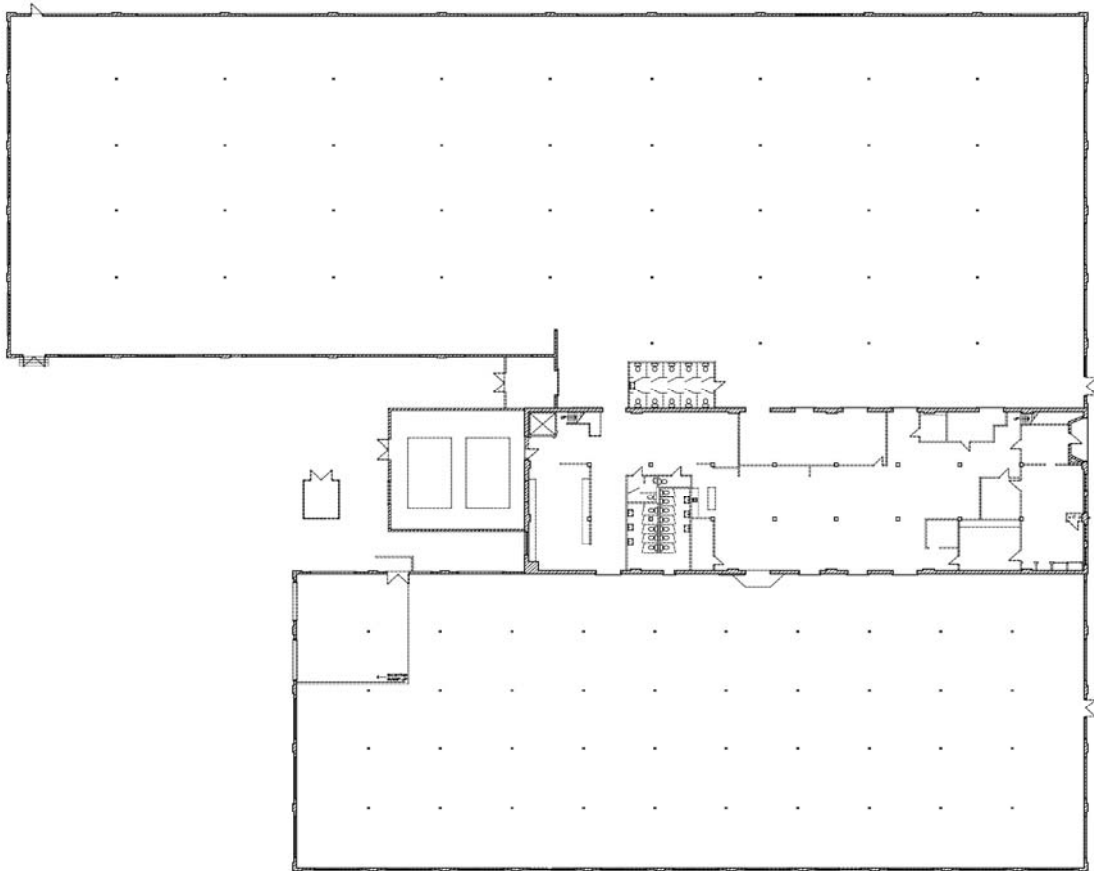
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**Dunklin County, Missouri**

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Footprint of Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5. Courtesy SWD Architects, Kansas City, MO

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**Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Dunklin County, Missouri**

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### Statement of Significance

The Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 located at 221 South Main Street, Kennett, Dunklin County, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A with local significance in the area of INDUSTRY. The Ely-Walker and Company (as it was originally known) was a highly successful wholesale operation established in St. Louis in 1879. In 1923 Ely & Walker partnered with the town of Kennett to build a three-story factory building adjacent to the south end of Kennett's town square. At the time, Dunklin County was an important cotton-growing region, the largest in Missouri. After World War I, the need for quality yet affordable clothing established a burgeoning garment industry that also served as the major employer for women working outside of the home. Although clothing had been manufactured in the northern states since the mid 1800's, Missouri's cotton industry exemplified the diversification in cotton products from field to factory after the Reconstruction Era that followed the Civil War. Frank Ely and David Davis Walker were the principal owners of the Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company.<sup>1</sup> The period of significance is 1923, the date of the building's construction to 1957, the arbitrary cut-off date imposed by the National Park Service.

### Elaboration

Prior to World War I textile mills began relocating from New England, New York and Pennsylvania to the Southern states. Many reasons for this transition have been given including: "...accessibility to markets, lower wages, improved living conditions...less trouble with the unions than in the North, and tremendous investment in capital."<sup>2</sup> Transportation of goods was also a factor as many extensions of rail lines were built in the southern states after the Civil War and the huge increase of automobile transportation after 1910.

By the 1890s a shift began as cotton growing as well as cotton-cloth or textile manufacturers moved west of the Mississippi River into the Southwest and out towards the lower Pacific Coast. Arizona, New Mexico and California were some of the last states to begin growing cotton and producing cotton by-products.<sup>3</sup>

Situated along the Mississippi River, the rich bottomlands fanning out from the river in the southeastern section of Missouri, also known as the Bootheel, supplied a fertile environment for cotton growing. After the Civil War cotton was no longer the cash crop of the wealthy southern plantation owners but instead, had become the livelihood of less wealthy and smaller farming communities. By the beginning of the 1900s, Kennett, in Dunklin County, Missouri, was one of the small farming communities in which cotton had become an important economic factor in the financial stability of the region.

By 1922, the State of Missouri ranked first in the average yield per acre of cotton production. Although states like North Carolina produced many more acres, the climate of southeastern Missouri was most favorable for growing cotton. Missouri farmers yielded 110 pounds, on average, more per acre than North Carolina's yield of 250

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<sup>1</sup> David Davis Walker is the great-grandfather to George Walker Bush, the 43rd President of the United States.

<sup>2</sup> George E. Linton PhD., *Natural and Manmade Textile Fibers: Raw to Finished Fabric*, (New York: Duell Sloan and Pearce, 1966), 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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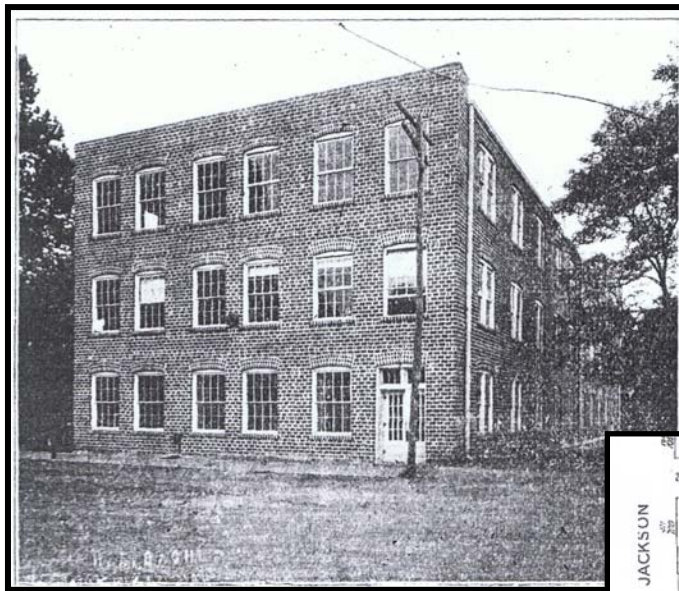
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**Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Dunklin County, Missouri**

pounds per acre.<sup>4</sup>

By 1923 Missouri was ranked the “10<sup>th</sup> Cotton Growing State” out of a total of sixteen cotton-growing states nationwide. Texas was in first position with 14,077,000 acres, while North Carolina was named seventh with 1,704,000 acres. Unlike other cotton growing states, Missouri’s cotton growing region was only found in the lower southeastern portion of the state with only 394,000 total acres. Dunklin County alone consisted of 70,000 acres of Missouri’s cotton growing acreage.<sup>5</sup>

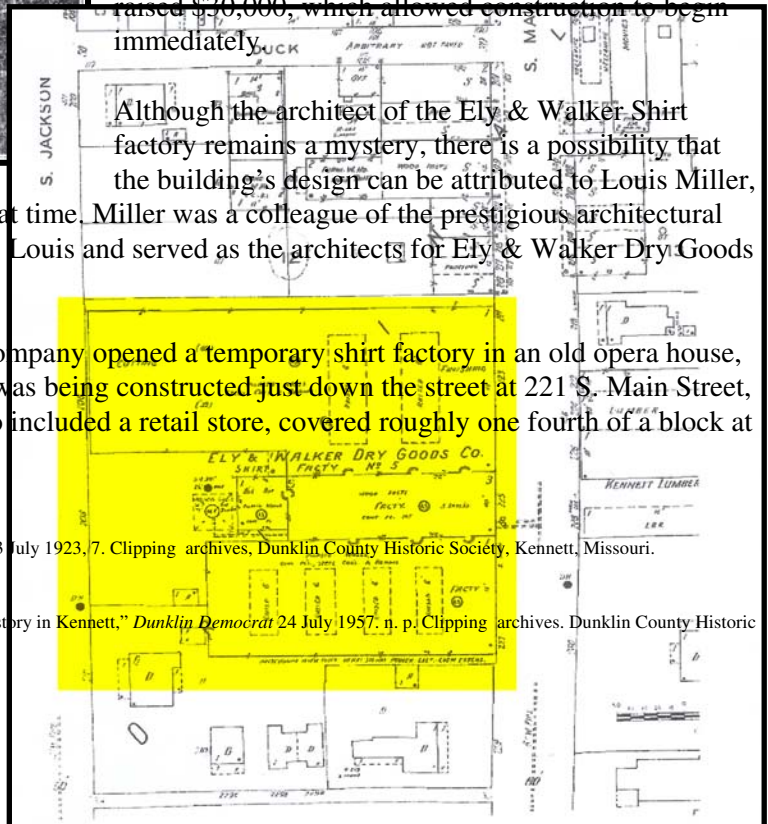
*Ely & Walker Shirt Factory, Kennett Missouri, Building Campaign*



In 1922 two businessmen of Kennett, Missouri, began looking for a complimentary industry to establish in the Bootheel region to aid in the financial outlook of the city and its surrounding area. Consequently, in January 1923, Frank Shelton and A. M. Riggs became aware that Ely & Walker Dry Goods and Company was looking into expanding their factory operations by building new factories in small towns. Together, the representatives of Kennett and the Ely & Walker Company struck a deal in which the City of Kennett would “...foot the bill for the largest structure that had ever been built prior to that time.”<sup>6</sup> The town quickly raised \$30,000, which allowed construction to begin immediately.

a well-known architect in Arcadia, Missouri, at that time. Miller was a colleague of the prestigious architectural firm of Eames and Young who were located in St. Louis and served as the architects for Ely & Walker Dry Goods main wholesale facility in St. Louis.

By May 9, 1923, the Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company opened a temporary shirt factory in an old opera house, while the new Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 was being constructed just down the street at 221 S. Main Street, in Kennett, Missouri. The new factory, which also included a retail store, covered roughly one fourth of a block at



Although the architect of the Ely & Walker Shirt factory remains a mystery, there is a possibility that the building’s design can be attributed to Louis Miller,

Dunklin Democrat, 19 April 1938.

<sup>4</sup> “Missouri First in Average Yield of Cotton per Acre.” *Dunklin Democrat* 13 July 1923, 7. Clipping archives, Dunklin County Historic Society, Kennett, Missouri.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Whit Thrower, “Ely & Walker Shirt Factory continues to Sew Thread of History in Kennett,” *Dunklin Democrat* 24 July 1957, n. p. Clipping archives, Dunklin County Historic Society, Kennett, Missouri.

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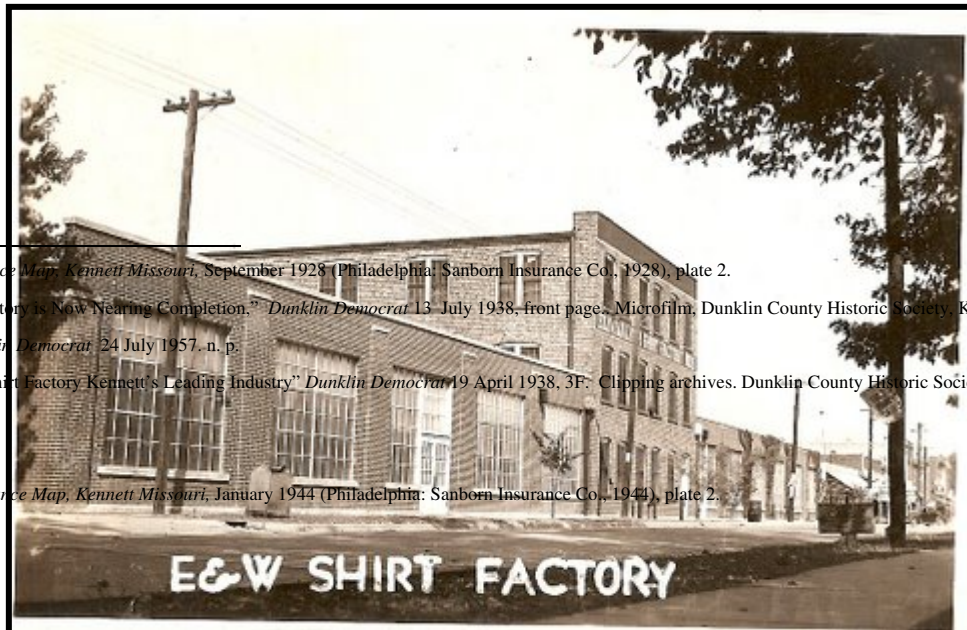
**Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Dunklin County, Missouri**

the corner of Wausau Place and 221 South Main Street. It opened for operations in late August 1923.

The general contract for the project was awarded to M. Meiner of Kennett, who was assisted by J. W. Taylor of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The contract was for \$55,000. The Sanborn Insurance Map, from September 1928, indicates that the three-story building was constructed with wood posts and concrete floors on the first floor, with a brick exterior.<sup>7</sup> Interior floors on the second and third floor were made of ash and supplied by Fray's Lumber Mill of Kennett.<sup>8</sup> An elevator that was called for in the plans initially caused some problems. However, Meiner traveled to St. Louis in search of one that matched the specifications. What he found was a used elevator, which he was able to acquire at a fraction of the price of a new one. The elevator was still in operation and good working order in 1957.<sup>9</sup>

Within the first ten years of operation the factory expanded operations by moving into the previously unused third floor. By Sanborn Insurance Map: 1944 1934 it was necessary to further expand the plant with a 90 x 220 foot addition to the south side of the original building at an approximate cost of \$30,000. The new section housed the sewing room with 225 machines relocated from the second floor into a space that had room for a total of 500 machines.<sup>10</sup>

In 1936 it became apparent that the plant needed a second addition, while a third unit (housing the boiler room) was added in 1937.<sup>11</sup> Both additions were placed on the north side of the original building as seen on the *Sanborn Insurance Map* of 1944.<sup>12</sup> The factory had expanded to the north and south of its original location, with one-story wings featuring multiple monitors. Wausau Place was absorbed by the construction of a new building that covered the entire length of the north end of the property between South Main Street on the east and South Jackson Street on the west. The north building contained the cutting and finishing work areas. To the south of the original wood beamed building, a new building was constructed that housed the factory. Both new structures were built with steel columns and beams and covered more than a city block in size.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>7</sup> *Sanborn Insurance Map, Kennett Missouri*, September 1928 (Philadelphia: Sanborn Insurance Co., 1928), plate 2.

<sup>8</sup> "Ely-Walker Factory is Now Nearing Completion." *Dunklin Democrat* 13 July 1938, front page. Microfilm. Dunklin County Historic Society, Kennett, Missouri.

<sup>9</sup> Thrower, *Dunklin Democrat*, 24 July 1957, n. p.

<sup>10</sup> "Ely-Walker Shirt Factory Kennett's Leading Industry" *Dunklin Democrat* 19 April 1938, 3F. Clipping archives. Dunklin County Historic Society, Kennett, Missouri.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Sanborn Insurance Map, Kennett Missouri*, January 1944 (Philadelphia: Sanborn Insurance Co., 1944), plate 2.

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**Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Dunklin County, Missouri**

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Photo c. 1940:  
Courtesy Dunklin County Historical Museum

### *The Women of Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5*

In 1923 the main factory for Ely & Walker was located in St. Louis. While executives were in Kennett finalizing plans to locate Factory No. 5, Miss Alvena Budde, who was considered a top-notch machine operator in the Ely & Walker St. Louis factory, was approached by an Ely-Walker executive. Budde was asked if she would take over the position as trainer for the new staff of operators that would be needed in Kennett. She was allowed to pick out an assistant, Cary Pfaff, whom she considered to be one of the best operators in St. Louis. Although there were a few men on the payroll, over the next 50 years, the employees would mostly remain women.<sup>14</sup> Budde and Pfaff arrived in Kennett on May 9, 1923, to begin their job of training the Kennett staff in a building that had originally housed Kennett's old opera house.

There were 50 electric, treadle operated, sewing machines set up when they arrived. The two women began with seventy-five women who were hired to operate sewing machinery. Budde and her assistant demonstrated the construction of the first shirt made in Kennett, which was displayed in the J. C. Penney store window. Budde found while training the women in shirt construction methods that very few of the local women had any experience working outside of the home. They spent the next several weeks giving the women scraps of cloth as practice material while the two women trained them on how to run the equipment.<sup>15</sup>

The working conditions during the first four months of operation were difficult. The portion of the building that housed the training site had no running water or toilet facilities. Summer was quickly approaching and working conditions became more difficult as the weather began to warm up. A dentist, located in the same building, supplied the women with ice water and opened his restroom facilities for their use.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thrower, *Dunklin Democrat* 24 July 1957. n.p.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

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Budde had anticipated being in Kennett for several weeks as she trained the local women on the sewing equipment. Her intention was to train as many women as possible that could eventually take over the positions as forewomen. However, Alvena Budde, known as "Aunt Vine," fell in love with Kennett and its people and decided to remain in Kennett. She eventually retired there and was frequently given credit for keeping the Ely & Walker Shirt Factory running.<sup>17</sup>

As training of the local women continued, the employee work force steadily grew. On August 3, 1923, just prior to the new factory building's completion, there were over 80 women who were working or training in the temporary factory. At the same time the new building was in its final stages of completion by painters, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and mechanics, over 3,000 newly completed shirts were stored in the new facility as they waited for the pressing equipment to be delivered and installed.<sup>18</sup>

August 1923 was an exciting year for the Kennett, Missouri, and surrounding area. With just three weeks left prior to the opening of the new shirt factory, new machines were being delivered and installed on the second floor of the building. It was anticipated that the total number of sewing machines to be installed was 196. In addition, thirteen shipments of finished shirts were shipped out of Kennett. The number of shirts stored in the new building had reached over 5,000 lots of a dozen shirts each. Six pressers were working in the new building. Together these young women pressed 120 dozen shirts each day and were expected to handle the factory average of 40 dozen shirts each, once the women were fully trained.<sup>19</sup>

The layout of the new factory, when fully operational, was expected to have a total of 300 sewing machines with 240 machines located on the second floor and sixty more machines on the third floor. All pressing and packaging was to be completed on the first floor with eighteen pressers and six packaging specialists in total. Once cutters were hired and the factory was funning at full operation the employment roll was anticipated to exceed 350 people.<sup>20</sup> The factory completed and opened for operations by August 31, 1923. As a major employer, Ely-Walker became the leading industry in Kennett, Missouri.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* "Ely Walker Shirt Factory Began Operations Wednesday," *Dunklin Democrat* 11 May 1923, front page.

<sup>18</sup> "Finishing Touches to New Factory This Week," *Dunklin Democrat* 3 August 1923, front page.

<sup>19</sup> "Ely-Walker Moving to New Factory Building," *Dunklin Democrat* 17 August 1923, front page.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Dunklin Democrat* 19 April 1938, 3F.

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Employees:  
Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5.  
Photos c.1935  
Courtesy:  
Dunklin County Historical Museum



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### *The Ely & Walker (E&W) Dry Goods Company*

The Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company was founded in 1879 as Ely-Walker & Company in St. Louis, Missouri. The volume of its business at the close of its first year was between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000. In 1883 the company incorporated under the name of Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company. Three men formed the corporation from the early Ely-Walker & Company: Frank Ely, president; David Davis Walker, vice president and James B. Hill, secretary and treasurer. In 1888 they moved into a large warehouse at Eighth and Washington Avenue in St. Louis, Missouri. Just two years later, in 1890, Frank Ely died. However, the company's name was so well known by this time that it was never changed.<sup>22</sup>

In 1893 David Davis Walker was president, William Herbert Walker was vice president and James B. Hill continued in the capacity of secretary and treasurer of the company. By this time the firm, a wholesaler of dry goods who also manufactured under their name, had sixty-five salesmen or jobbers who covered seventeen states including what was then considered Indian Territory. In 1893 the company did \$7,000,000 in business.<sup>23</sup> The firm's success increased and before 1900, E & W had several factories that produced goods under the E & W name. It was during the early years that J. C. Penney, as well as Sears and Roebuck, purchased as much as one-third of their inventory from E & W.<sup>24</sup>

In 1902 David Davis Walker resigned his position as president due to ill health. The position was turned over to his son William H. Walker who served only one year as president. W. H. Walker had a major disagreement with the company concerning a personal financial interest. David Walker, still on the board of directors, insisted his son fix the conflict or resign. W. H. Walker resigned. David R. Calhoun, who had been with the company from the beginning, was elected president.<sup>25</sup> In 1906 David Davis Walker Jr. and, another brother, Joseph Sidney Walker were listed as key officers of the company.<sup>26</sup>

In 1907 E & W outgrew their location at 8<sup>th</sup> and Washington. The architectural firm of Eames and Young was hired to design a new building at 15<sup>th</sup> and Washington in St. Louis. During the years prior to World War I, ninety-percent of E & W wholesale inventory was manufactured by other sources. This trend continued until 1918 when, E & W opened the Ely and Walker Trunk Factory in St. Louis. E & W found that by manufacturing their own product lines the profit margin was substantially increased through the practice of taking over the manufacturing margins. E & W grew substantially as they absorbed smaller and financially troubled companies and factories.<sup>27</sup>

As part of their plan to remain financially strong within the wholesale industry, E & W opened the men's dress

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<sup>22</sup> Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company, "The City of St. Louis and its Resources," *The St. Louis Star-Sayings*, 1893. n. p. Vertical files, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis Missouri.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Marvin Kohn, "The St. Louis Merchant Dry Goods and wholesaler in Transition," Dissertation, 1957, 38-46. Archives. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis Missouri.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> M. L. Van Nada, ed. "David Davis Walker Jr." *The Book of Missourians* (St. Louis: T. J. Steele, Co., 1906), 445.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

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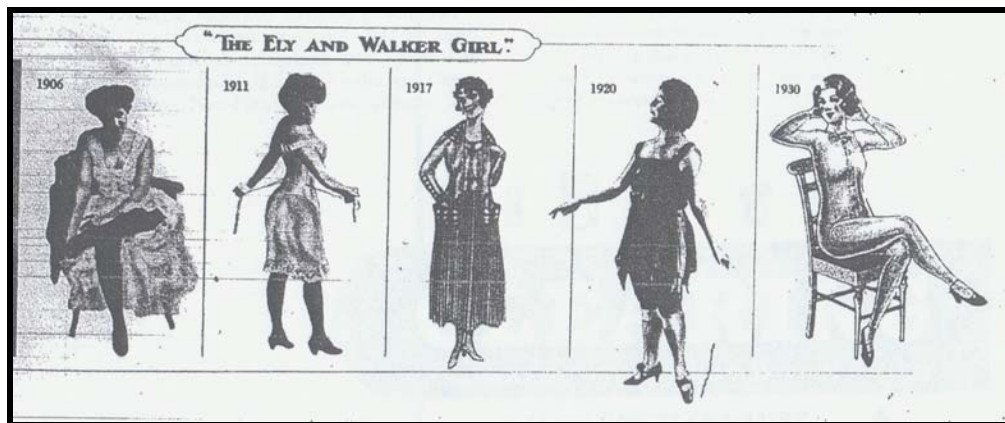
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### Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 Dunklin County, Missouri

shirt factory in Kennett in 1923. That was followed by the purchase of Kewanee Dry Goods Company in Illinois, then McCabe's in Rock Island, Illinois. In 1924, Warrenton, Missouri, offered inducements to E & W, similar to those in Kennett, to build a knitting factory in their town. Like Kennett, the town raised money (\$20,000 in this case), to build the knitting mill while E & W contributed only \$5,000. This plant remained open until 1953. The financial success of the Ely-Walker enterprise was evident when only three "general line merchant dry goods wholesalers... were still on the scene in 1925; Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company, Rice-Stix Dry Goods Company, and the St. Louis branch house of Butler Brothers."<sup>28</sup>



*The Ely and Walker Girl: Ad showing style changes from 1906 to 1930.*

In 1926 E & W sales organization had 300 sales representatives who were distributing merchandise to retailers such as Famous-Barr Company, as well as smaller independent retail dry goods and general stores throughout the country.<sup>29</sup> Its major line of goods consisted of fabrics and piece goods, notions such as drug sundries, domestic goods for the home, hosiery, work clothing, as well as dress and sport shirts. Secondary lines consisted of toys, luggage, headwear, lace goods, china, glass and other household sundries.<sup>30</sup>

The company had made so much progress with their manufacturing division that in the 1930s they began to expand their operations in order to offer their customer base more competitive prices. Two new factories were opened in Missouri, one in Vandalia that manufactured women's dresses, and one in Salem that manufactured men's shorts, shirts, and pajamas. At that time, they also purchased 51 per cent of a company called Lincoln Hosiery Corporation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where E & W began the production of ladies hosiery under the name "Cinderella."<sup>31</sup>

Between 1930 and 1954, under the presidency of E. P. Cave, the company continued to absorb smaller dry goods

<sup>28</sup> Kohn, 45-50.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> "Wholesaling on Borrowed Time," *Fortune*. November 1947, 122-125.

<sup>31</sup> Kohn, 50.

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### Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 Dunklin County, Missouri

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and factory facilities. They were engaged in three marketing strategies; retailing, full service wholesaling, and manufacturing. It was also during these years that the company went through very difficult times—first the Great Depression of the 1930s and then World War II in the 1940s. The importance of labor relations become tantamount to the company's well being during this period. Although Ely-Walker employees organized the packing and shipping departments under the new labor unions there was a large contingency of E&W employees who remained non-union.<sup>32</sup>

During World War II, E & W sales soared. Employment increased when companies began working double and triple shifts. With rationing being implemented the problem of high demands and low supplies turned this period into a sellers market for E & W. It was also during this period that Ely & Walker made some of their best acquisitions within the mill houses, the largest being Calhoun Mills in Calhoun Falls, North Carolina, in 1946. Most all of the mills that were acquired by E & W were cotton mills. The company did not believe that the new synthetic fabrics that were being produced at this time had the staying quality of cotton.<sup>33</sup>

Burlington Industries purchased Ely & Walker' textile factories in 1956. E & W had been a fully integrated company that had become a major producer of cotton textiles with a successful system for distribution. The number of individuals owning controlling stock was small. Those owners were also ready to retire. The timing for Burlington to purchase Ely's management-ownership interests was at its best. Burlington Industries continued to operate eight of Ely & Walker factories. There was a heavy emphasis on manufacturing "E & W" brand shirts, which was a large part of the product line manufactured in Kennett, Missouri.<sup>34</sup>

In 1964 Washington Manufacturing Co., of Nashville, Tennessee purchased the Ely & Walker division from Burlington Industries.<sup>35</sup> Although the Kennett, Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 closed in the mid-1980s, shirts are still manufactured today under the E & W trademark as well as Cumberland Outfitters in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>36</sup> Today the Ely and Walker Dry Goods Company building at 15<sup>th</sup> and Washington in St. Louis is called the Ely and Walker Loft Building. It is listed on the National Register as part of the Washington Avenue Historic District.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Frank Ely (August 8, 1842- February 14, 1890)*

Very little information is known about Frank Ely and his career with the company was short. He was born in Carrollton, Missouri, in 1842. Ely decided not to go to school but rather worked for his older brother, L. B. Ely,

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 55-60.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 65-68.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 85-88.

<sup>35</sup> Wm. Kester, "Ely & Walker Operation Here Will be Ended," *St. Louis Post - Dispatch* 16 November 1965, Mercantile and Manufacturing Scrapbook, 145. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>36</sup> Oxford Shirts, Cumberland Shirts <http://www.elyandwalker.com/index.asp?go=home>

<sup>37</sup> National Register Web site. Washington Avenue Historic District listed February 12, 1987.

[http://www.nr.nps.gov/iwisapi/explorer.dll?IWS\\_SCHEMA=NRIS1&IWS\\_LOGIN=1&IWS\\_REPORT=100000044](http://www.nr.nps.gov/iwisapi/explorer.dll?IWS_SCHEMA=NRIS1&IWS_LOGIN=1&IWS_REPORT=100000044)

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as a clerk in his store. Ely enlisted in the Confederate Army at age seventeen but became very ill and left the military. He then went to New York for two years before returning to St. Louis, Missouri, where he worked for a dry goods company, Crow, McCreery & Co. He secured a junior partnership after only three years. He remained at the dry goods company until 1877 and went on to open his own firm as Ely, Janis and Company and two years later partnered with David Davis Walker, under the name Ely-Walker & Company. Ely died of pneumonia in 1890 at the age of forty-eight.<sup>38</sup>

*David Davis Walker (July 19, 1840- October 4, 1918)*

David Davis Walker, known as D. D. Walker, was raised in Bloomington, Illinois. Walker moved to St. Louis in 1857 where he took a job with the firm of Crow, McCreery & Co. as an office boy. In 1865 he was given a partnership in the firm. In 1878 Walker left Crow, McCreery & Co. and in late 1879 formed the partnership with Frank Ely as Ely-Walker and Company. By 1883 their young partnership had been so successful that they organized and incorporated under the name Ely & Walker Dry Goods Company. The constant progression of their company eventually earned them the position as one of the most famous dry goods wholesaler in the nation.<sup>39</sup>

Walker's family has an impressive line of succeeding generations including the fact that he is the great-great grandfather of our current president, George W. Bush. In 1862 D.D. married Martha A. Beakey of St. Louis Missouri. Their children were Rose Marion, Joseph Sidney, William H., David D. Jr., George Herbert and James Theodore. Three of the sons, William David Jr. and George Herbert became part of their father's dry goods company.<sup>40</sup> His religion was Catholic and politically, Walker was strongly Democrat.<sup>41</sup>

Ill health caused D. D. Walker to step down as president of E & W in 1902. His son William H. took over but served only one year. By 1906 D. P. Calhoun was president while David Davis Jr. served as vice-president and Joseph Sidney was secretary and treasurer.<sup>42</sup>

The fortune amassed by D. D. Walker came from his shrewd business sense in supplying stores such as J. C. Penney's and Sears Roebuck and many other companies. D. D., with his son George Herbert Walker known as Bert, built a family summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, to escape the hot humid Missouri summers. Prior to his death D. D. began giving his fortune away. At that point two of his sons, Bert and David Jr. took their father to court in the attempt to have him declared legally insane. However, before the verdict of insanity was passed down, D. D. Walker died at the Kennebunkport home at Walker's Point on October 4 1918. David Davis Walker was buried in Calvary Cemetery, a large Catholic cemetery located in St. Louis.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Howard L. Conard, ed., *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri: A compendium of History and Biography* Vol. 2 (New York: The Southern History Company, 1901), 677.

<sup>39</sup> Conard, ed. Vol. 6 (New York: The Southern History Company, 1901), 313.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Kitty Kelley, *The Family: The Real Story of the Bush Dynasty* (New York: Doubleday Press, 2004), 25.

<sup>42</sup> M. L. Van Nada, ed. *The Book of Missourians*, (St. Louis: T. J. Steele & Co., 1906), 445.

<sup>43</sup> Kelley, 27-30.

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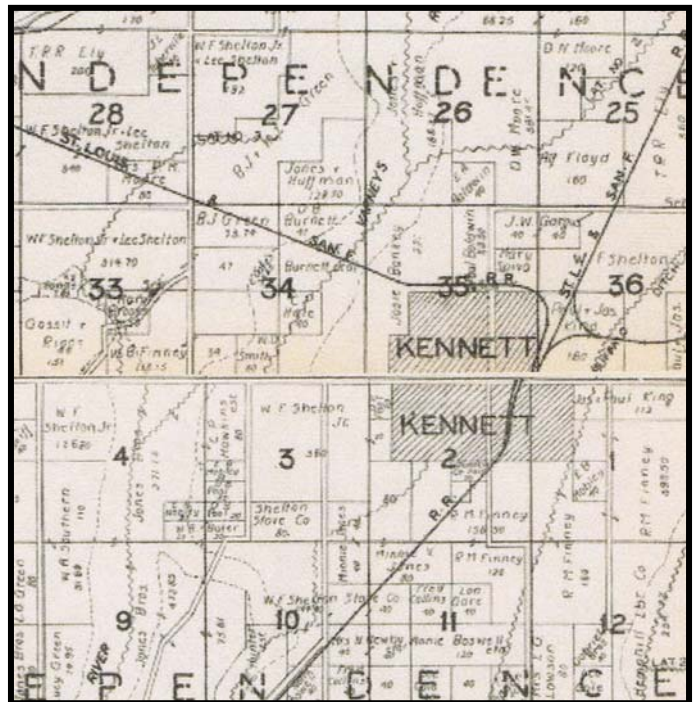
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Bert Walker was D. D.'s fifth child for whom D. D. had great hopes of becoming a Catholic priest but Bert was the defiant child. After attending school in England he returned home as an anti-Catholic who wished to marry Lucretia "Loulie" Wear, who was a Presbyterian. Bert also rejected the Democratic politics with which he had been raised and became a staunch Republican. He never worked for Ely & Walker Dry Goods, and instead, developed his own wealth through an investment empire. The inherited wealth from Ely & Walker combined with Bert Walker's investment dealings formed the base of the Bush family fortunes. Kennebunkport came to the Bush family when Bert's daughter Dorothy married Prescott Bush, who parented George Herbert Walker Bush, who in turn fathered George Walker Bush.<sup>44</sup>

*Kennett, Missouri*

The city of Kennett is set in township 18N and 19N, Range 9E of Independence Township in Dunklin County, Missouri. It was founded in 1846 by a commission appointed to locate the county seat for Dunklin County, Missouri. The city is located near a former site of a village belonging to the Delaware Indians under Chief Chilliticoux and was first named after him. In 1850-51, the name was changed to Kennett, in honor of Mayor Luther Martin Kennett of St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>45</sup> Kennett, as the county seat of Dunklin County, has a courthouse and a public square on Main Street. Although plans began as early as 1875 it was not until 1892 that Kennett became the terminal point of the St. Louis, Kennett & Southern Railway, which also marks the date that Kennett became a modern town according to modern standards set in 1912.<sup>46</sup> When the railroad arrived, Kennett became the leading trade center of Dunklin County. It was a city of the fourth class and had a grade school, four churches, an opera house, bank, machine shop, flour and sawmills, two cotton gins, two hotels, and a weekly newspaper, the *Dunklin Democrat*. The population in 1899 was estimated to be around 1,500.<sup>47</sup>



*Dunklin County*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Howard L. Conard, ed., *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri: A compendium of History and Biography* Vol. 3 (New York: The Southern History Company, 1901), 528.

<sup>46</sup> Robert S. Douglass. *The History of South East Missouri*, (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), 284-86.

<sup>47</sup> Conard, 528.

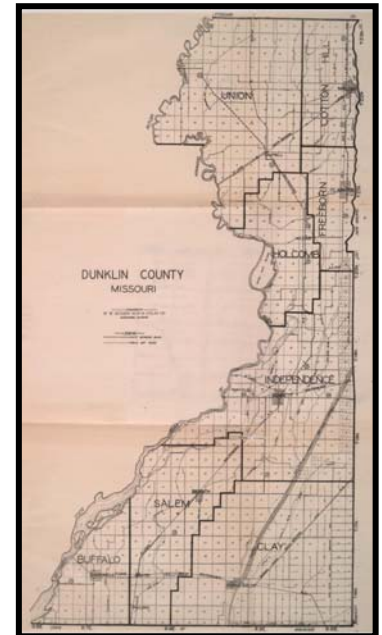
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The southern portion of Dunklin County was originally part of Arkansas. In 1819, when Arkansas was organized, residents of what comprised the greater portion of Dunklin and Pemiscot counties, preferred to live in Missouri. A delegation was sent to Congress to ask that the territory east of the St. Francis River and south to parallel 36 degrees north be included in Missouri. Consequently, Dunklin County was organized by a legislative act on February 14, 1845, from part of Stoddard County at the south of parallel 36 degrees, 30 minutes, north, and named in honor of Daniel Dunklin, one of the early governors of Missouri. In 1853 another section of land on the north was added.<sup>48</sup> Dunklin County is a county in the extreme southeastern part of the State in what is known as the Missouri Boot-heel. It is bounded on the north by Stoddard County, on the east by New Madrid and Pemiscot Counties and on the south and west by the State of Arkansas.<sup>49</sup>



The county is divided into eight townships, named respectively: Buffalo, Cotton Hill, Clay, Freeborn, Holcomb Island, Independence, Salem and Union. The chief villages are Kennett, Malden and Clarkton.<sup>50</sup>

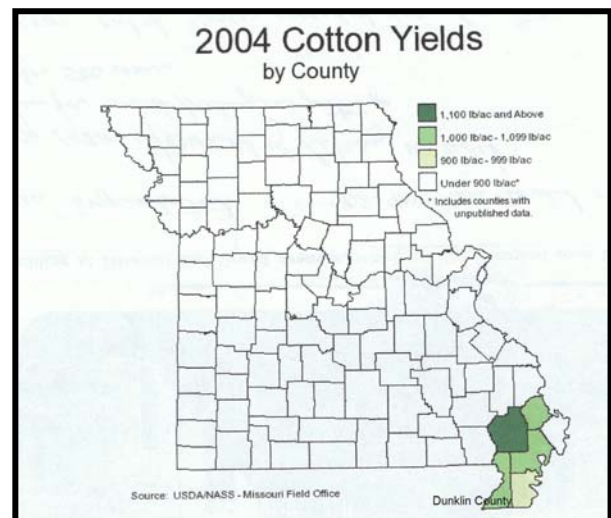
Dunklin County had a population of 21,706 in 1900 covering an area of 269,717 acres. Cotton was the chief crop with wheat and corn as secondary crops. Timber in Dunklin County was chiefly of oak, hickory, ash, gum, cottonwood and elm. Lumber was a principal manufactured product well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1898, Dunklin County was a leader in the exports of cotton, cottonseed products and lumber products.<sup>51</sup>

**County Estimates**  
**Cotton**

**Acreage, Yield and Production, by County, Missouri, 2003-2004**

County	Planted		Harvested		Yield		Production	
	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
	-acres-		-acres-		-lbs-		-480 lb. bales-	
Dunklin	147,500	138,700	145,500	138,300	815	1,073	247,000	309,200
New Madrid	97,400	93,900	95,200	93,500	921	1,080	182,700	210,400
Pemiscot	91,500	86,300	86,800	85,200	816	969	147,600	172,000
Scott	12,600	9,200	12,200	9,200	791	1,023	20,100	19,600
Stoddard	50,700	51,600	50,000	51,500	980	1,102	102,100	118,200
Other Counties	300	300	300	300	800	960	500	600
<b>State Total</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>380,000</b>	<b>390,000</b>	<b>378,000</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>1,054</b>	<b>700,000</b>	<b>830,000</b>

\* Counties with small acreages are not published, included in Other Counties.  
Source: USDA/NASS - Missouri Field Office



<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

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### **Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 Dunklin County, Missouri**

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Dunklin County's decline began after World War II when many individuals moved closer to larger cities looking for employment. When the Ely & Walker Shirt Factory closed in the 1980s agribusiness including cotton, continued to sustain the area. The loss of the shirt factory came at a time when many US textile corporations sought cheaper labor from overseas manufacturing and began outsourcing their production lines to factories in countries such as Thailand, India, and the Philippines.

Although textile product manufactures have moved outside of the United States, cotton- growing remains a high yield crop within the U.S. As illustrated in the map and chart from 2004, five Missouri counties, including Dunklin County, reported high yields that averaged 1054 pounds of cotton per acre.<sup>52</sup> Dunklin County's yield is in second place of the five counties according to state statistics. During the same period, North Carolina had 106 cotton-producing counties but reported only 900 pounds of cotton per acre for the same year.<sup>53</sup>

The Ely-Walker Shirt Factory No. 5 located in the city of Kennett in Dunklin County, Missouri was an important industry that helped to develop economic strength in the Missouri Boot-heel region. Cotton growing became a prime crop for this region during the Reconstruction Era. The advantages found by investors in the southern states after the Civil War included: improved living conditions; a milder climate; an improved rail system; cheap labor; and open land ready for development. Eventually automobiles, followed by highway systems, would further improve the economic conditions in the Southern states. Ely-Walker provided a major employment opportunity for women, who for the first time began working outside of the home. This was especially unusual for women in rural areas of the country. Previously, textile mills were largely found in the Northern States and located in large cities. For over sixty years, Ely-Walker provided employment for 300 to 400 women and men of Dunklin, as well as the surrounding counties. As a community today, Kennett has a population of 11,260. The city is undergoing changes in modernization and is one of 10 cities receiving downtown development assistance through the Downtown Revitalization Economic Assistance for Missouri (DREAM) initiative.<sup>54</sup> The renovation of the Ely-Walker Shirt factory building is an important part of the redevelopment plan currently in place.

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<sup>52</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Missouri Field Office, Online, accessed April 10, 2007.

[http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Missouri/Publications/County\\_Estimates/2004/Cotton\\_Production\\_by\\_County.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Missouri/Publications/County_Estimates/2004/Cotton_Production_by_County.asp)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Kennett Missouri Online, Accessed April 10, 2007. <http://www.kennettmo.com/> The vision for Kennett's downtown is anchored in the district's current attractions that surround the courthouse -- antique stores and flea markets; clothing retailers and jewelers; a new doctor's office; a furniture store; the Sheryl Crow Aquatic Center; a health club with personal trainers; a new delicatessen; a pharmacy; an interior design shop; a Firestone store for hardware, toys and appliances and a hair-design studio and nail salon.

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**Box 48/24** Illinois -- Ely and Walker Dry Goods (Murphysboro, TN), 1944, 1946

**Box 55/1** Missouri -- Ely and Walker Co. (Kennett, St. Louis, St. Joseph, MO.), 1944-194

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### Verbal Boundary Description

#### TRACT A:

All of Lot Forty-One (41), Block Twelve (12), ORIGINAL PLAT OF THE CITY OF KENNETT, DUNKLIN County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof.

#### TRACT B:

All of Lot Nine (9), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, DUNKLIN County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof.

#### AND

All of Lot Eleven (11), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, DUNKLIN County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof, EXCEPT, the North 27 feet thereof, AND ALSO less the following: Beginning at the Southwest corner of said Lot Eleven (11) and running thence North 0 degrees 07' West 61 feet along the West line of said Lot Eleven (11), thence East 19 feet; thence South 45 degrees 03'30" East 21.23 feet; thence South 0 degrees 07' East 26 feet; thence South 44 degrees 29'30" West 28.04 feet; thence West 14 feet along the South line of said Lot Eleven (11) to the point of beginning ALSO LESS AND EXCEPT Part Lot Eleven (11), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION described as beginning at a point 27 feet South of the Northwest corner of said Lot Eleven (11), thence East 43.50 feet; thence South 109 feet; thence West 43.50 feet to the Southeast corner of Lot Two (2), Block "A", SMITH-GRUGGETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, thence North 109 feet to the point of beginning.

#### TRACT C:

Lot Six (6) and all of Lot Seven (7) of what is known as SOUTH KENNETT, except a strip off the North side, 7 feet in width, North and South measurement, 132 feet in depth, East and West measurement, and a strip of land 7 feet in width off the North side of Lot Seven (7) in SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof. Lot Eight (8), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof.

Lots Thirty-Seven (37) and Thirty-Eight (38), Block Twelve (12), THE ORIGINAL TOWN OF KENNETT, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof. The North 27 feet of Lot Eleven (11), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION to the City of KENNETT, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof. All of Lots Thirty-Nine (39) and Forty (40), Block Twelve (12), THE ORIGINAL TOWN OF KENNETT, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof. The North 98 feet of Lot Five (5), lying East of Jackson Street in SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the Northeast corner of the Northwest Quarter (NW1/4) of the Northeast Quarter (NE1/4) of Section Two (2), Township Eighteen (18) North, Range Nine (9) East, thence due West 698 feet, thence due South 418.3 feet, thence Due East 23 feet to the point of beginning, being the Northwest corner of the Lot being described, thence due East 88 feet, thence South 98 feet,

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

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**Ely and Walker Shirt Factory No. 5  
Dunklin County, Missouri**

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thence West 88 feet, thence North 98 feet to the place of beginning and being further described as Lot One (1), Block A, SMITH-GRUGETT ADDITION to the East part of Lot Five (5), SOUTH KENNETT ADDITION, now or formerly bounded on the North by an alley and on the West by Jackson Street, All in the City of KENNETT, DUNKLIN County, Missouri.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Ely & Walker Shirt Factory No. 5, Kennett, Missouri.

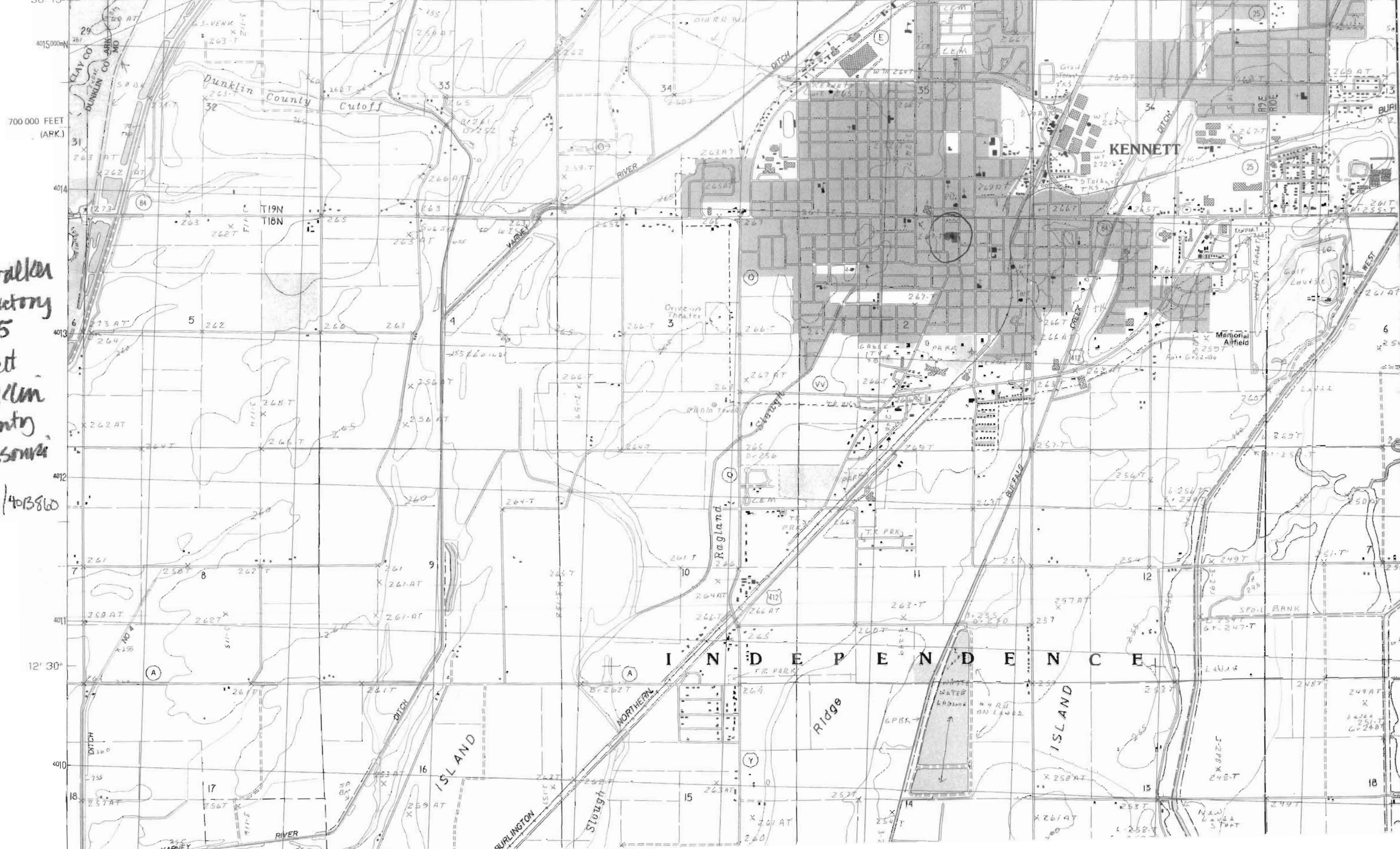
### Key to Photographs

Len Fohn, photographer. April 2007. All negatives are the property of Architectural & Historical Research, LLC, Kansas City, Missouri.

1. Main or east façade; view facing northwest
2. Main or east façade; view facing southwest
3. Main or east façade of the 1923 building; view facing west
4. Detail of the main entrance of the east façade; view facing west
5. Rear or west façade; view facing east
6. View of the rear and west façade of the south wing; view facing east, northeast
7. North façade of the north wing; view facing south
8. West and south façade of the north wing; view facing northeast
9. General view of Ely & Walker from the south; view facing north.
10. Roof top of the south wing; view facing northwest
11. Roof top of the north wing; view facing southeast
12. General view of the interior
13. General view of the interior

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

90° 07' 30" 759000E 780 2560 000 FEET (ARK.) 5' 763 764 765 2' 30" 768 640 000 FEET (MO.)



Ely Walker  
Sheet Factory  
No. 5  
Kennett  
Dunklin  
County  
Missouri  
15/764410/403860









**ELY**  
**& WALKER**

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