

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 La Plata Square Historic District

other name/site number N/A

2. Location

street & town along portions of Gex, Sanders, and Moore streets N/A not for publication

city or town La Plata N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Macon code 121 zip code 63549

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 Oct 9, 2008
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	
36	8	buildings
1		sites
1	3	structures
		objects
38	11	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)

- Commerce/Trade/specialty store
- Commerce/Trade/financial institution
- Commerce/Trade/department store
- Commerce/Trade/restaurant
- Commerce/Trade/professional
- Government/city hall
- Government/fire station
- Government/post office

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/Trade/specialty store
- Commerce/Trade/financial institution
- Commerce/Trade/professional
- Government/city hall
- Government/post office
- Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Other: One-Part Commercial Block
- Other: Two-Part Commercial Block

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation** Concrete
- walls** Brick
- roof** Asphalt
- 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. 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.)

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.)

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Period of Significance

1855-1958

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

La Plata Public Library

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

La Plata Square Historic District
Name of Property

Macon County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 13 acres

UTM References

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

1 1/5 5/4/3/2/9/8 4/4/3/0/5/4/9
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/5 5/4/3/5/0/5 4/4/3/0/5/4/6
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/5 5/4/3/5/9/4 4/4/3/0/4/5/2
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/5 5/4/3/4/2/0 4/4/3/0/1/7/4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See map.

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michelle Diedrich

organization Missouri State Historic Preservation Office date December 27, 2007

street & number 1101 Riverside Drive/ P.O. Box 176 telephone 573-526-1680

city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65101

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 multiple

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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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**La Plata Square Historic District
Macon County, MO**

Summary

The town of La Plata (population roughly 1,486¹) is located in Northeast Missouri in Macon County, about 13 miles south of Kirksville. The nominated district is the downtown commercial area on South Gex (pronounced 'Jay'), Moore, and Sanders Streets positioned around the town's public square. The district consists of 48 buildings and structures, and the public square. Of these 49 properties, 36 buildings, one structure, and the public square are contributing to the district and eight buildings and three structures are non-contributing. The dates of the contributing properties range from 1855 to the 1950's. The majority were built in the early twentieth century. The buildings are mostly one-or two-part brick commercial blocks with minimal decoration.

Narrative

The majority of the buildings in the La Plata Square Historic District are brick one or two-part commercial blocks with flat roofs. Many, if not most, share party walls with their neighbor creating an uninterrupted wall of commercial buildings. Isolated buildings are usually due to demolition or construction of smaller modern buildings. La Plata has retained the majority of its downtown district with minimal intrusion of modern buildings.

There is not much stylistic variation in these properties. Fires in the early years of the 20th century plagued the downtown area destroying many of the multi-story high-style 19th century buildings. The citizens, however, were quick to rebuild. This speedy reconstruction is reflected in the simplistic design of buildings. Undoubtedly expediency not aesthetics played the primary role in reconstruction as well as maximizing the amount of available space. Costs too likely played a role, as a few of the buildings became single story instead of two. In addition, they were devoid of ornamentation unlike their 19th century predecessors. Despite this trend, a few of the late nineteenth century buildings have survived with relatively few changes.

The early twentieth century buildings built after the fires were simplistic in design, generally featuring flat roofs, relatively plain facades and large lower level storefronts with recessed entries. Nearly all of them have subtle decorative brickwork and decorations at the cornice and above the windows.

Historically, shops occupied the lower level of the properties while apartments and offices were

¹ Wikipedia, "La Plata, Missouri," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Plata%2C_Missouri, Accessed 20, September, 2007.

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housed in the upper levels. Currently, this area is much declined with many of the buildings vacant. Those that are occupied are either used for commercial or municipal purposes or for storage. Despite this regression, the majority of the buildings have retained their historic appearance. The most common alterations are boarded windows and wooden or vinyl awnings. Relatively few buildings have changes in siding or rooflines.

The properties sit at zero lot line next to the sidewalk and face the public square on their respective streets. As mentioned, the boundaries include two and a half blocks of South Gex Street and a block of North Gex Street on the west side of the square and a block and half of Moore Street on the north side of the square. A single historic property extends on the east side of the square on South Main Street (although its street address is 202 E Moore as it faces E Moore) and finally Sanders to the south has roughly a block and a half of properties.

The following individual property descriptions are organized alphabetically by street address. Each description has a subhead listing the street address, historic or earliest known business name, the c. date of construction, and contributing status. The subhead is followed by a brief description of architectural features.

Individual Building Descriptions

La Plata Public Square bounded by N Gex, Sanders, Moore, and S Main Streets, 1855, Contributing

The city park was part of the original plat in 1855. It has retained that purpose to this day. Although not landscaped the area has several trees that provide shade. There are several objects on the square that are used for practical and recreational purposes. On the east side of the park a portion of a "hitch rack" from 1891 is still in place.² There are three modern **non-contributing** structures in the park: a large pavilion on the south side facing Sanders Street across from the post office. On the west side is a small conglomeration of park benches and picnic tables and in the very north-west corner is a bandstand. Finally a playground sits on the far east side of the square. These are minor, removable, and do not detract from the original purpose of the square.

101 E Clark, Green's Garage, 1970, Non-Contributing

This one-story pre-fabricated Butler-type building has a gabled aluminum roof, metal siding, and one-by-one horizontally single sliding sash windows. Its main features are three garage ports. It faces south away from district focus. Because it was built in 1970 it is **non-contributing** to the district.

² Cindy Moore, e-mail to author, September 24, 2007

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101 N Gex, Clem's Market, 1952, Non-Contributing

This one-story building sits on the northwest corner of S Gex and W Moore. It extends a half block down W Moore Street, and a quarter of a block on N Gex. The entrance is situated on the corner of these streets. Due to the modern metal siding and heavy wooden awning is it considered **non-contributing** to the district.

Next to 101 E Moore, Webber's Grill, circa 1940, Contributing

This small one-story red brick building shares a wall with 101 E Moore. Built in the 1940's; it is a simple red brick building with a flat roof, one entrance to the north, and a window unit on the south.

107 N Gex, Home Press Building, circa 1877, Contributing

This two-story building was most likely built in the late 1870's. It appears on early Sanborn maps and no evidence has been discovered that this building has been rebuilt. The upper four windows have been boarded up. The cast-metal pilasters are still visible, as is the decorative metal cornice. A heavy wooden awning stretches and ends over the lower portion of this building. The brick storefront beneath it is a modern alteration. It shares a party wall with its neighbor.

101, 105-107 S Gex, Farmer's and Merchants Bank, et al, circa 1902, Contributing

This building sits on the corner of S Gex and W Moore and shares a party wall with the funeral home to the south. This two-story brick building houses two separate storefronts and three separate businesses. Although there is some decorative brickwork the area of interest is the center part of the roofline that rises slightly in a pseudo hipped-pediment. Directly below this feature is a brick-framed concrete nameplate that once featured a design long since eroded away. The four upper windows are in-filled with metal. The upper and lower floors are separated by a band of wooden shingles that extends to the west side of the building. Below this band are two storefronts. The storefront to the south (107/105 S Gex) has been somewhat altered. It has been divided in half and utilized by two separate businesses, the entrances flanking their respective sides. The north storefront (City Hall) windows appear to be original. This entrance is on the corner of building facing the junction of S Gex and Moore Streets. A high-style flat entablature rests on the doorway. The building extends four bays west on West Moore street. Four round arch windows are spread out over the top portion of this building, all have been boarded up. The lower portions feature three large window groupings. At the westernmost section is another entrance.

Between 107 and 109 S Gex, Butchers, circa 1894, Contributing

This small one-story commercial block building features some decorative brick work but is otherwise plain. There have been businesses in this location dating from 1894 and, according to

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Sanborn maps from this period, it retains the same footprint. Thus the construction date was in or around the 1890s. It has been incorporated into the funeral home and is now utilized as an entrance to the business via large double doors. An elaborate canopy supported by square columns starts at the north corner of the building and extends south across the lower portion of its neighbor 109 S. Gex.

109 S Gex, Gains and Gooding, 1902, Contributing

This building once shared a party wall with 111 S Gex (south), however due to the demolition of this building, the south wall is exposed. This two-story brick commercial block does share a wall with its neighbor to the north (107 S Gex). This building is similar in design to 121 S Gex. The upper three windows have segmental arches and are partially filled in to house modern windows. The decorative brick cornice features additional upper rows of bricks with four small concrete squares spaced evenly across the parapet. Each block has a single number engraved on them, 1, 9, 0, 2; the date of the building's construction. The only other detail is the parapet on the south corner of the wall. Due to its singularity it was most likely associated with the since-demolished building. An elaborate canopy supported by square columns stretches across this building to 107 S Gex.

113 S Gex, La Plata Pharmacy, circa 1980, Non-Contributing

113 S Gex is a one-story building with metal siding on the north and south portions. A large wooden awning covers the front brick façade. Due to the construction date and style it is **non-contributing** to the district. It is isolated from the other buildings by an alley to the south and the recent demolishing of 111 S Gex.

115-117 S Gex, Myron Sears Variety, circa 1909, Contributing

This two-story brick commercial block houses two separate storefronts. A recessed stairwell leads to upper apartments/offices and separates these two spaces. There is decorative brickwork at the cornice. Directly above and below the seven second-story windows is a stone band. These windows have been boarded up as has the transoms above each shop. The south storefront has added concrete under the windows but otherwise appears unchanged. The vinyl canopy stretches across the lower portion of this building and ceases at the north corner. An alley separates this building from its neighbor to the north (113 S Gex).

119 S Gex, Sinn Jewelry and Millinery, circa 1909, Contributing

This is a one-story brick building built in or before 1909. A dark red stepped parapet features decorative corbelling. It appears to be of a different brick than the first floor, but the parapet is most likely original to the building or put there shortly after construction. The storefront retains its traditional configuration, but has been modified with wood and stucco, however the recessed entrance and windows retain the original location. A thin vinyl canopy stretches uninterrupted over the lower portion of this building.

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121 S Gex, Grand Leader, circa 1902, Contributing

Built around 1902, this two-story red brick commercial block presents a decorative dentil cornice and parapet. The upper three windows openings have been partially filled in to accommodate modern windows. In addition the lower storefront has had alterations to allow for an air conditioning unit over the entrance. A thin vinyl canopy extends north over the lower portion of this building and to its neighbors on South Gex. Despite these changes the building retains its historic appearance.

133 S Gex, Tansil and Grantges, 1921, Contributing

This one-story brick building features a decorative stepped parapet with concrete bands and ornamentation. It shares a common wall with adjacent two story properties on either side. The four windows are modern and like its neighbor to the south (135 S Gex) there is a modern wooden awning extending across the lower portion of the building. However it maintains its overall historic appearance.

135 S Gex, Masonic Hall/La Plata State Bank, circa 1902, Contributing

This two-story decorative brick building is considered the most picturesque in the La Plata Square Historic District. Built before 1902, this building sits on the corner of Gex and Sanders Streets. Eight bays of this building extend down Sanders Street. The first floor features seven large windows. Of these windows, four bays (western side) were most likely fixed windows utilized by the bank while the last four were at one time used as two separate store fronts. The upper floor windows for the entire building have round arch openings that are partially filled in to accommodate modern windows. There is a corner entrance at Sanders and Gex. This clipped corner features the main entrance and a rounded parapet that once featured a Masonic symbol, from its long period as a Masonic lodge. The shadow of this symbol still remains. Above this is a decorative concrete sphere pediment. The upper windows of this bay and the two following bays to the north feature stone keystones instead of brick but are otherwise similar to the east bays. A modern wooden awning begins at the clipped corner and extends north across the adjacent buildings on South Gex. Despite the modern windows and awning the building retains its historic character.

201 S. Gex, Dr. Ralph Gillett Practice, 1938, Contributing

This building shares a common wall with the building to the south. It is a one-part brick commercial block with a flat roof. The building recesses in stair step formation on the northern most side and extends down Sanders Street. Two glass block windows are on the front façade. The entrance is recessed by seven or eight feet with a concrete sidewalk leading from the central sidewalk on S. Gex Street. A painted concrete cap extends across the top of the building. The lintels of the same material on each window are painted.

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209-213 S Gex, Marien's Bros. Grocery, et al, circa 1920, Non-Contributing

213 S Gex is a one-part brick commercial block built in the 1920's. Two large shop windows flank the recessed entrance. These have been boarded up and painted with a diamond window in the middle of each. There is a large shed roof addition covered with metal siding. Due to this alteration it is considered **non-contributing**.

209 S Gex now appears to be an extension of the current business. It also has a brick façade however the windows appear of a more modern construction, as is the door. The upper portion of this building is covered in metal siding that extends to the flat roof. It is also **non-contributing** to the district.

Between 215 and 213 S Gex, Clarence Huskell Grocery, circa 1928, Contributing

This small brick one-part commercial block shares a common walls with Green Theatre (215 S Gex) to the south and 213 to the north. The shop window has been boarded over and painted. Likewise the large one-by-one glass transom has been painted over. The entrance is recessed into the north side of the facade. The façade consists of decorative brickwork at the top of the building while the rest is laid in a stretcher bond.

215 S Gex, Green Theatre/Shinn Hatcheries (original location), 1928, Contributing

This one-part brick commercial block was built in 1928. It faces east on S. Gex Street and is separated from 225 Gex to the south by a small alley. The façade consists of a brick stretcher bond with decorative brickwork cornice. Beneath the cornice is a painted rectangular banner in black with white trim with tapered ends. There are two double-leaf entrances in the center façade of the building. Large square windows that are currently boarded flank these. The building originally had a marquee that has been removed.

225 S Gex, Arthur Green's Garage, circa 1928, Contributing

This one-story brick building consists of about four bays with some decorative brickwork on the facade. Decorative brick pilasters between each bay extend slightly beyond the roofline and are capped with cement abaci and cement decorative balls. The bays are similar in construction being composed of fixed glass windows with transoms. Modern vinyl siding covers a number of these windows and doors but does not extend over the brick facade. The third bay houses a paneled glass (18 panels) garage door with a wooden sash and rectangular transom above. Some of the panels have been boarded.

227- 229 S Gex, Tonkinson and Harris Ford Dealership, circa 1910, Contributing

Most likely built between 1910 and 1915³ this textured cement block building has three storefronts with some ornamental features on the cornice. The first storefront (southern most) has had replacement cement block added to the building. This is non-textured and extends to the top

³ 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, on file at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office

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of the building. It is possible that the original wooden door remains in this bay. The southern window directly to the left of the door has been boarded. The second storefront has two-over-two fixed display windows on each side of the narrow entrance. There is a large square transom over wooden door. A white metal header over the doorway and windows extends to the third bay. The third storefront (227 Gex) is wider than the southern bays and consists of one two-over-two display window and a one-over-one display window (some panes boarded) on each side of the pedestrian entrance and garage door. The large transom over the entrance is now filled. A paneled garage sits in this middle of this bay and has a row of two two-over-two display windows.

302 S. Gex, La Plata Oil Co., 1921, Contributing

This early gas station is a small brick building with a hipped roof. It has three standing gas-pumps. The roof overhangs to encompass a carport large enough for a single vehicle to pull beneath. The gas pumps are lined up with two brick support columns in which a second vehicle can pull along side of and use. There is a single-hung window with a painted wooden sash on the enclosed portion of the building. The entrance, also on this side, is currently boarded up.

304 S. Gex, La Plata Oil Co. Garage, circa 1930, Contributing

This white rock-faced concrete block garage faces S Gex Street not far from the La Plata Oil Co. The central façade features a stepped parapet and a single non-original garage door. The building itself is several bays deep with two entrances on the north side. This side (north) has a large display window divided into three parts with transom. The western entrance (north side) is flanked by display windows and a transom. The eastern entrance is wooden and is in an extension that continues one or two bays to the east. This 'addition' could possibly be original although the roofline is lower than that of the main garage. If it is an addition it was most likely built close to the time of construction as it is of the same materials as the garage.

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101-123 E Moore, The Famous, et al, 1908, Contributing

Situated on the corner of N Gex and E Moore Streets, this 1908 two-story brick building contains several businesses. The west side of the building is red brick. The parapet overlooks a flat roof and is punctuated by a band of yellow brick blocks. This side is relatively plain however it features twelve upper windows that alternate every other window between completely and partially in-filled. There are six bays on this side but only the two northern-most bays have storefronts. The northern-most storefront has been filled with vinyl siding while the next storefront is simply a window and doorway. The southern-most bay features a store window with a partial shingled awning over it that curves around to the front of the building. However, the entrance to this store is on the south-facing side of the building. The front, southern-facing portion of the building is of yellow brick with red brick block decoration at the cornice across the entire facade. It consists of nine storefronts. The second story of this façade is relatively unbroken with most of the windows partially or completely boarded up.

Moving west to east, the first two bays have a shingled roof awning over the lower portion of the building shading the original storefronts. These have a slightly higher roofline but judging from the deteriorated state it can be assumed that the upper rows of bricks were removed from the middle portion of the building. The following bay is similar although its shingled awning has four columns. The fourth and fifth bays do not have an awning however the transoms in these storefronts are filled in with the same shingle material as the awnings. The smaller sixth storefront appears to be original save that the transoms have been painted. The seventh and eighth bays have had alterations to the storefronts primarily with the introduction of modern siding. These bays also deviate from the others by sporting a metal decorative stamped band above the storefronts. This band, while perhaps not original, appears in historic photos from the 1920's and 1930's. It continues through the remaining bays. The ninth and tenth bays are similar to the first two bays in that they have a shingled awning. The store windows in these bays are much larger, possibly because they are utilized as a single business. Whether or not these are historic is unknown, the door between them however does appear to be original. The roofline also rises up to the height of the first two bays and continues to the end of the building. The eastern-most storefront is unusual in that it has upper segmental arched window openings instead of flat. These are partially filled to accommodate more modern windows. This bay also has a blue fabric awning. Although it is difficult to determine, these may have been separate buildings until the facades were unified after the fire in the early twentieth century.

125-129 E Moore, Farmer's Café, M.F.A. Farmer's Exchange, circa 1909, Non-Contributing

This one-part brick commercial block has three bays. It currently houses two separate businesses. The storefronts have been covered with vinyl siding with only the upper brick cornice and brick piers visible. The fenestration has been changed and the entrances most likely

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have been altered as well. Due to these changes this building is considered **non-contributing** to the district.

131 E Moore, Belt Grain Company, circa 1940, Contributing

This property consists of a small office building, a large metal shed connected to the grain elevator and another metal shed to the north. All of these structures are contributing to the district. The office is a small square brick building with a hipped roof. The one-by-one windows on the west side are modern as is the entrance and one-over-one window on the south side. A modern vinyl-clad addition has been added to the back. Despite these changes the office retains its historic appearance. Not far from the west side of the office a metal stair and walkway leads north to the elevator. The elevator and associated sheds are set back from the office by several yards on a large open concrete slab. The east part of the elevator is raised a story off of the ground. This portion of the elevator is a metal cylinder with a conical roof that is connected to another large metal cylinder that is roughly three stories high. Directly behind this structure is a one-story metal shed with gabled roof. The elevator connects another shed of similar construction to the west.

202 E Moore, Wheatcraft Motor Company, 1924, Contributing

This building sits on the corner of E. Moore and S. Main Streets. It is a one-story red brick building with a flat roof. A stepped parapet rises above the roofline on the west side of the building demonstrating that it was once the original entrance to the building. This side of the building appears to have had either a storefront, or more likely a garage entrance in the center of the façade that has since been boarded up. Likewise some of the windows and a doorway on this side have been boarded. However the original windows are visible on the north portion of this side. The building itself is roughly three bays across (from the original entrance) and three or four bays deep. The modern entrance is on the north side of the building, the windows on this side appear modern. Despite these alterations the building retains its historic appearance.

104 W Moore, Telephone Exchange, Date Unknown, Non-Contributing

There is dispute about this building's date. Local residents claim this building has been here since the 1940's however there is no evidence that this building (at least in its current state) existed during this time. Stylistically this one-story multi-level brick building looks modern (within the last 40 years). It certainly has modern windows and entrances. The east side of the building sits lower than the west and is punctuated by a separate but identical roof. There appears to have once been a doorway between these two levels that has since been bricked up to appear as part of the façade. A small vinyl window has been placed in the center of this in-fill. The flat roofs consists of a thick white plaster slab that extends over the wall on each side of the building, which is out of character with the rest of the buildings in the district and the eras in which they were constructed. Due to these qualities it is considered **non-contributing** to the district.

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119 W Moore, La Plata Fire Department, circa 1928, Contributing

This building appears on the 1928 Sanborn map but not before. It is a one-story brick building with a flat roof. It consists of three large garage openings that once housed the city's fire trucks. The garage doors are not original nor is the pedestrian entrance surround between the west and central garage entrances. In the early 1950's a small addition was added to the back of the building to serve as the city jail. Although the doors are modern, the building still retains the look and feel of a fire department.

101-102 E Sanders, Post Office, 1937, Contributing

This is an attractive one-story brick building with a flat roof. The centered entrance contains paired metal doors under a large transom. It has a concrete surround featuring an Art-Deco bas-relief carving of an airplane. The flanking bays contain large windows with stone surrounds and carvings depicting the bow of a ship and a train. The end bays contain smaller windows with stone lintels and panels below. A stone water table separates the first floor from the plain brick parapet wall. Concrete stairs lead from the sidewalk and joins a concrete base that extends into two blocks of concrete that support a lamppost each.

126 E Sanders, Hill's Turkey Hatchery, circa 1928, Contributing

This one-part commercial block houses two storefronts that are currently utilized by one business. Each storefront appears original with recessed entries, wood framed transoms, and display windows. The brickwork of the façade changes from a semi-Flemish bond to the east to an American bond to the west. Otherwise the storefronts are identical. The sign panels over each storefront are outlined in header bricks, accented by painted corners.

119 W Sanders, Dr. C.H. Bulkley Practice, circa 1909, Contributing

This is a one-part brick commercial block with a raised basement. This freestanding building is set back from the street behind a small parking lot. Substantial ornamental brickwork is featured in the parapet. A set of cement stairs with vertical panels on the street-facing side leads up from ground level to the main entrance. This entrance is a modern metal-framed door with transom. It is flanked by modern paired one-over-one windows. Apart from the central entrance, the building is accessible from a door on the west side of the façade, at street level.

123 W Sanders, Ray Bruce Cleaning, circa 1900, Contributing

This is a simple one-story brick commercial block with a flat roof. Two modern windows flank the entrance. It appears as if these once extended upwards and have since been bricked. Likewise it appears there was once a transom over the door that also has been bricked. A gabled shingled awning extends across the facade.

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Summary

The La Plata Square Historic District encompasses three sides of the public square along Gex, Sanders, and Moore streets in La Plata, Macon County, Missouri. The district is the town's central business district and is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE. Though platted in 1855 it was not until the railroad arrived in 1867 that the town flourished. By the late 1800s, La Plata's commercial center developed two distinct types of businesses: those that catered to locals and export businesses that relied on the rail system to transport goods regionally and nationally. La Plata's agricultural export businesses, such as Shinn and Hill hatcheries and wool and fur traders such as Belt Fur and Wool Company, flourished into the 20th Century. As improved roads reduced reliance on trains, automobile-related business and entertainment venues became an important feature of La Plata's downtown. The nominated district remained a vital commercial center in La Plata into the 1980's when nearby larger communities began to introduce strip malls and other large commercial centers.⁴ The period of significance for the district is 1855 to 1958, the date of the platting of the public square through the 50 year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance but no more specific date can be defined.

Elaboration⁵

The first documented settlement in the La Plata area was in 1827 by Drury Davis who established a trading post a half mile from the current town's location. According to sources⁶ this location was or developed as an intersection of north and south stagecoach roads. While the specifics of this period are at best murky, it is known that the settlement was officially platted in 1855. In March of that year, Henry O. Clark surveyed the area and came up with a plat of a town. In 1847, when he was eleven, Clark came to the area with his father from Ohio. Clark would later become La Plata's first known school teacher. At the age of nineteen he presented his plans to three of the settlement's prominent men who would later become known as the forefathers of La Plata. These men, Louis Gex, Theodore Sanders, and Dr. W. W. Moore, approved of Clark's plan.

The name of the recently approved town was drawn from a hat of names supplied by local settlers. The winner was Dr. Moore's choice of "La Plata", Spanish for "the silver." The name was only partially his intention as he thought the name was French for "the city of the silver

⁴⁴ Cindy Moore, e-mail to author, December 6, 2007

⁵⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section is from Books I&II of La Plata businesses on file at the La Plata Public Library and information provided by Cindy Moore in various e-mails to the author between June and December 2007.

⁶⁶ Wikipedia, "La Plata, Missouri," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Plata%2C_Missouri, Accessed 20, September, 2007.

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river.”⁷

The original plat consisted of four simple blocks. Three of these blocks were designated as building or property sites, while the northeast corner was an open green square labeled “Public Square Block no. 1.”⁸ We can assume from this inscription that the square was an early feature in Clark’s plan. It certainly is a central feature on the plat and to the nominated district.

The streets on the plat had yet to be named. The three prominent gentlemen of the settlement including Henry Clark named the streets, not surprisingly, after themselves. Clark Street, (not within district boundaries) ran east/west in the southern most portion of the plat on what was then the border of his father’s land⁹. Moore Street did the same on the northern edge. Sanders ran east/west through the center of the plat bisected by Gex Street running north/south. Two other north/south streets, Bradely on the eastern edge, and Owensbey on the west completed the plat. Although these streets are not within the district boundaries they too held the early commercial and residential properties of La Plata. Demolition and modern construction have prevented their inclusion within the district boundaries.

Within the period of significance the streets closest to the square, Gex, Moore, and Sanders, became the commercial hub of the town with the exception of Bradley Street. Bradley was incorporated into the North Missouri (later Wabash) rail lines.

Fifteen years after the town of La Plata was platted the population was around 700. Early businesses during this time period were mostly farming related, including various dry good stores, a blacksmith, a grist mill, and a creamery that had some early success but was destroyed by fire in 1882.¹⁰ By the year 1900 the population had nearly doubled to 1,345.¹¹

Although viable before, this growth in population was in no doubt thanks to the introduction of two rail lines. The North Missouri Railroad (later known as the Wabash) came to La Plata in 1867 on the east side of the square on Bradley Street. This line was removed in the 1993. The other railway was the Santa Fe Railroad established in La Plata in 1887 (outside of district boundaries).¹² This railroad (now owned by Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway) is still operational and in addition to freight, it is one of the few in Missouri that offers a continuous Amtrak passenger service to the West Coast.

The Santa Fe nearly did not make it to La Plata. At the time neighboring Macon and Kirksville

⁷⁷ Cindy Moore, e-mail to author, June 13 2007.

⁸⁸ 1855 plat of La Plata on file at the La Plata Public Library

⁹⁹ Wikipedia, “La Plata, Missouri,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Plata%2C_Missouri, Accessed 20, September, 2007.

¹⁰ Members of the Macon County Historical Society *History of Macon County MO*, 1910, (Chicago: Henry and Taylor Co.)

¹¹ Secretary of State, “Missouri Population 1900-1990,” www.sos.mo.gov/library/reference/census/cities1900-1990.pdf, Accessed 19 November, 2007

¹² From undated Western Manuscripts news clippings accessed 2007

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were vying for the railroad and it appeared that one of them would have it. La Plata, in a last minute meeting, made the better offer, giving the right-of-way and twenty acres to the railway. This proved to be beneficial to the small town. The railways brought new businesses and opened the door for local commerce. For example, men's and women's clothing stores, doctors, entertainment venues, jewelers, and cafés became commonplace businesses around the square that traditionally featured only a handful of like establishments.

In 1910 the population reached its peak at 1,605. However it was short-lived and by 1920 the population dropped to 1,463 (the reason is unknown) and remained in this range until another drop in the 1950's.¹³ Despite this initial decline in population the commercial area in the square remained strong. With two rail lines, one right on the square, shipping became an important aspect in La Plata's downtown businesses.

Agricultural goods were La Plata's biggest exports. Transported via ox-cart, tobacco was the primary export prior to the railroad.¹⁴ After the introduction of the North Missouri Railroad (and as it was later known, the Wabash Railroad) tobacco, hogs, corn, and soybeans became major exports. The M.F.A Farmer's Exchange (1920's, 127-129 E Moore) and Belt Grain Company (1940's, 131 E Moore) both exported agricultural goods via the Wabash Railroad.

In addition to the goods above, La Plata became the home of several hatcheries. In the 1920's and after, Hills Turkey Hatchery on 126 E Sanders and Biggs Better Bred Baby Chicks on 121 E Moore shipped chicks throughout the state. However, the most successful hatchery was Shinn Hatcheries (originally located on 217 S Gex and later on 104 N Gex. Unfortunately, 104 N Gex has recently been demolished). During its operative years it became the largest exporter of chicks in the state. Between circa 1920 and 1930 they exported ten million chicks. In the 1930's Macon County was one of the largest producers of chicken in the state. La Plata and Macon jointly shipped 166 carloads of poultry and eggs. Shinn Hatcheries no doubt played a large role in these statistics.¹⁵

Timber, coal, fur, wool, and water were also shipped via the rail lines.¹⁶ In the 1930's Belt, Cox and Company (later Belt Fur and Wool Company) settled in the same location as Shinn Hatcheries on 104 N Gex. They distributed wool and fur nationally and internationally from this location for over fifty years.

Although exporting was an important feature in the La Plata Square Historic District, most of the

¹³ Secretary of State, "Missouri Population 1900-1990," www.sos.mo.gov/library/reference/census/cities1900-1990.pdf, Accessed 19 November, 2007

¹⁴ Home Press, La Plata MO, November 6 1991, on file at Western Manuscripts

¹⁵ From Western Manuscripts news clippings

¹⁶ St. Louis National Historical Company, *History of Randolph and Macon Counties*, (Clinton: The Printery, Clinton 1884).

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businesses around the public square served the local community. The public square with its park-like setting functions as an assembly place for locals. It has been used for over 150 years as a place for individual leisure, family and social gatherings, church services, ceremonies, entertainment, and community socials and fairs.

Other modes of entertainment offered around the square were theatres, bars, a museum, a pool hall, a bowling alley, and various cafés and restaurants. The Lyric Theatre (or possibly the Electric Theatre) was believed to be one of the first theatres on the square. It opened circa 1909 on the upper floor of 115-117 S Gex. In addition the Green Theatre provided entertainment for the community from 1935 to the late 1960's at 217 S Gex. Annjes Inn, presumably a bar, was next door at 215 S Gex in the 1930s and 1940s. In the same location in the 1950's Lovinger Pool Hall offered patrons several pool tables for recreation. Likewise McQuown's Bowling Alley operated in the 1940's at 120 E Moore. Various pubs and bars operated out of 213 S Gex and cafés and restaurants ran their businesses on 125 E Moore and in the small building between 104 N Gex and 101 E Moore.

Besides recreation, everyday goods and services were the primary type of business around the La Plata Public Square. Barbers could be found at 105 and 107 S Gex in the 1900s through the 1940s. Within this time period grocers offered goods at 209 S Gex, 313 S Gex, 103-105 S Gex, 103-105 E Moore, and 120 E Moore. Likewise, furniture could be purchased from 109 S Gex, hardware from 101 E Moore, and jewelry from 119 S Gex.

Women and men's clothing stores were found throughout the square from the late nineteenth century until the 1980s. Tansil and Grantges was an especially successful women's clothing store. Established in 1908 they opened their business at 133 S Gex. A fire destroyed the building in 1920. Despite this tragedy, the business quickly rebuilt and opened the doors of their new building in 1921 in the same location. Although it changed owners a few times, Tansil and Grantges offered women's clothing and accessories until the mid-to-late 1970s.

By the 1920s La Plata also had several businesses dedicated to automobiles. La Plata Oil Company and its affiliated garage was the first service station in La Plata at 302 and 304 S Gex. It served the community from 1921 throughout the 1950s. In 1924 Wheatcraft Motor Company on 202 E Moore offered farming equipment but was also an early Chevrolet dealership. A few years later in 1928 competition opened on the other side of the square when Tonkinson and Harris opened a Ford dealership at 227 S Gex.

The La Plata square district at one time boasted three banks that were later incorporated into one large institution, the La Plata Savings Bank. This bank is still operating today in its original incorporated location at 135 S Gex. La Plata also had a federal post office (still in its original 1930's location on 101-102 E Sanders), and several newspapers, the longest running of which is the La Plata Home Press at 107 N Gex. It occupied this building from 1877 to 1995. Although

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the newspaper moved from this location (it is currently on Brown Street, out of district boundaries), it still is in publication.

Doctors, dentists, and lawyers have been a continuous feature around the La Plata Square to serve the local community. Dr. Ralph Gillett ran his practice from 201 S Gex from 1938 until 1969. Currently another medical group uses this same building.

Social organizations were also important. The Masons and the Odd Fellows occupied buildings on South Gex for much of the period of significance. The Masons meeting room was in the upper floor of the La Plata Savings Bank (135 S Gex) for ninety years. Although they moved out in 1992, the shadow of the emblem of their order is still visible on the parapet of the building.

The town square also held and still holds the community's civic services: the City Hall, Municipal Court, and Police Station are all located on Moore Street. Until the 1990's the fire station and city jail was also close to the square at 119 W Moore. Their continued presence in the historic business district represents the continuous viability and importance of the downtown area, especially within the period of significance.

As mentioned, fire was a frequent and unwanted visitor to the La Plata square. A fire on the west side of the square occurred in 1902. In 1908 a similar blaze destroyed much of the north side of the square, and in 1923 a fire ruined all but three properties on the south side.¹⁷ The date of construction of some of the buildings reflects these fires. For instance the buildings on the north side of the square on Moore Street are primarily from 1909. These were rebuilt after their predecessors were destroyed in the 1908 north side fire. Despite this destruction, the businesses were quickly rebuilt, if in a less grand fashion, pointing to the importance of the trades to the community.

Despite La Plata's relatively small size, the town boasts three other listed buildings (all outside the district boundaries): the John T. and Mary Doneghy Home (NR 03/22/90); Gilbreath-McLorn House (NR 11/16/78); and the Lester and Norma Dent House (NR 05/18/90). The latter is the home of Lester Dent, La Plata's most famous son. He authored the famous Doc Savage pulp fiction series that would later be the pre-cursor for such comic book heroes as Batman and Superman. In his elder years Lester Dent owned several businesses in La Plata which will be discussed below.

To further demonstrate the evidence of the endurance of the local businesses in La Plata's downtown area, individual histories are provided below. Note that many if not most of the buildings have had continuous occupation of business from the early part of the twentieth century to at least the 1950's. The individual histories include the date of construction, the earliest known or historic name (or in some instances occupation), contributing status, and

¹⁷ La Plata Home Press clipping, November 1991, on file at Western Manuscripts

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history of the building up to the current use.

Individual Building Histories¹⁸

Public Square, bounded by N. Gex, Sanders, and Moore streets, 1855, Contributing

The public square was part of the original plat of 1855. Not long after its establishment the park was fenced to keep out loose animals. The fence was torn down in 1891 when hitch racks were installed for horses. Part of these hitch racks remain on the east side of the park. The park has traditionally been, and still is, utilized for group functions and entertainment. In 1887 local businessmen and citizens in conjunction with merchants built a bandstand that was used for public speaking and in later years hosted concerts. This bandstand was in use until 1937 when it was sold. The current bandstand in the park is the third in the park's history. It is used for periodic church activities and public entertainment. In the 1950s and 1960s there was a horseshoe pit in the park that was used frequently, in addition, several of the older residents would play checkers in the park. Apart from individual leisure, the square was and is utilized for school graduations, weddings, and family gatherings. Every year since 1955 the Soybean Festival has been held in the park. The Soybean Festival celebrates La Plata's standing as a major soybean exporter in northwest Missouri. The festival includes games, booths, dances, concerts, and contests.

101 E Clark, Green's Garage, 1970, Non-Contributing

This area and the empty lot to the north were the original location of several hotels (the La Plata Hotel, Farmer's Hotel, Ruxton Hotel, and Denver Hotel) and the Maplewood Hospital. By 1935 these businesses were either torn down or lost to fire. In 1970 Green's Garage was constructed on this site. Due to its age is considered **non-contributing** to the district.

101 N Gex, Clem's Market, 1952, Non-Contributing

Clem's Market operated out of this building from 1952 until 1958. From 1965 to at least 1989 it was the C&R Super Market. The C&R moved out of the district boundaries sometime after 1989. It is currently vacant. Due to the metal siding and canopy addition it is considered **non-contributing** to the district.

Next to 101 E Moore, Webber's Grill, 1940's, Contributing

This small one-story building has for the majority of its life been a grill. The earliest reported business was Webber's Grill in 1948. This continued until 1952 when it changed hands and was simply known as "The Grill". Other restaurants in this building have been Campbells's Grill in 1957, Dehner's Grill in 1958, Ruth's Grill in 1965, and Herbie's Grill in 1968. During this

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, the information for this portion was obtained or supported from Cindy Moore, librarian for the La Plata Public Library and Book I and II of La Plata Businesses, obtained from La Plata's Public Library. In addition information from the Members for the Friends for La Plata Preservation, namely Bill Bullock, was also utilized in this section.

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timeframe, the only break in the restaurant business was in 1955 when it was briefly the Centennial Celebration Office. For the past ten years or so (since roughly 1997) the building has been used as residential space.

107 N Gex, Home Press Building, circa 1877, Contributing

This building was for most of its life the home of the La Plata Home Press. Established in August of 1876, the La Plata Home Press was founded by J.B. Thompson. Thompson started the business in Moberly and less than six months later moved the newspaper to La Plata 1877. Others newspapers include the La Plata Globe, La Plata Advocate, and the La Plata Free Press. The only one to survive is the La Plata Home Press. Although the same entity, it has had several variations of name. It has also been known as Macon County Home Press, the La Plata Home Press, and simply the Home Press. It incorporated the neighboring Atlanta Express into the paper in the early 1960s but later dropped the separate title, although it did still cover news in that area.

The Home Press is the oldest newspaper and business in the county. It celebrated its official 100-year celebration in 1977.

The Home Press passed through several owners, most readily documented throughout the seventies and eighties, however it is still running. In 1995 it moved from 107 N Gex to 213 S Gex and after a period of time it moved to its current location on North Brown Street, outside of the district boundaries.

After the Home Press moved from this building (107 N Gex) the La Plata Police Department occupied it briefly but shortly moved to the north side of the square. The building has remained vacant for the last seven or eight years.

101 S Gex, Farmer's and Merchant's Bank, 1913, Contributing

Farmer's and Merchant's Bank was established in this location in 1913. Before this it was the site of a restaurant and newsstand dating from around 1910¹⁹. Farmer's and Merchant's operated from this location until consolidation in 1932. It is uncertain when La Plata's City Hall moved into this building, however, it is thought to be not long after the La Plata banks consolidated and moved to the southwest side of the square. According to local citizens, the sign for Farmer's and Merchant's Bank was on the inside of this building until a few years ago. In 1939 the west end of City Hall was used as a public library "boasting a ladies room and lounge. Sponsored by the Atalpal club. (sic) The lounge is opened until 9 PM, the library opens from 2:30-5 on Wednesday and Saturday."²⁰ The library started with 600 books and grew until it was able to purchase its own building on the north side of the square in 1968. From its time as a bank, the upstairs of the building was used as the lodge hall for the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows.

¹⁹ Cindy Moore, e-mail to author, September 24, 2007.

²⁰ Home Press clipping, February 29, 1939, on file at Western Manuscripts

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Although the date is unknown, the IOOF were disbanded in La Plata long ago, most likely within the period of significance. It is currently still used as the City Hall.

105 S Gex, Holmes and McKinstry Barber Shop, 1913, Contributing

Like its neighbor, 107 Gex, this location has a long association with barbers. The Holmes and McKinstry Barber Shop opened in this location in 1902. Their building was destroyed by fire in 1909, but was rebuilt and the business reopened in 1913. In 1945 to 1961 it was Ancell and Meeks Barber Shop. In 1961 to 1966 this building housed Ancell and Smith Barber Shop, from 1966 to 1971 it was Dick Fiedler Barber Shop, and in 1972 it was known as Denny Jones Barber Shop. The last barber shop in this location was Leland Collins Barber Shop from 1981 until roughly 2005. It is currently My Heart's Ease, an antique store.

107 S Gex, barber shop, 1913, Contributing

Not much is known about this building other than its historical association is with barbers. Sanborn maps from 1894 to 1916 indicate that there was a barber shop in this location. Possible businesses are Chadwick's Shaving Parlor, 1898, Christy Gilliland Barber (date unknown), and Kenny Corrier Barber shop in 1962. In the 1970's an insurance company occupied this space. It is currently used as a salon called Magic Mirrors.

109 S Gex, Gains and Gooding (originally 109 and 107 Gex), 1902, Contributing

These are two physically separate buildings that have been merged to house a single business. The south side building (109 Gex) was used primarily for furniture. J.M. Deer owned the first furniture store in 1888. The line of furniture stores in this location continued until well after 1906. In 1893 it was owned by Den and Gains, in 1894 R. Gains, 1897 Gains and Gooding and in 1906 (in the current building) Gooding and Christie. It is unclear how long Gooding and Christie was in business but in 1965 this building and its neighbor to the north were used as Pollock Funeral Home. The funeral home closed in the early 1990's. The lower portion is currently vacant with the upper floors used as residential space.

Prior to its use as Pollock Funeral Home less is known about the north building (originally 107 S Gex). According to Sanborn maps from 1894 until 1916 this building was simply labeled "Meat". As such, it's likely this was the location of a butcher shop.

113 S Gex, La Plata Pharmacy, circa 1980, Non-Contributing

This was the original site of the City Bakery Café which operated from 1902 until the late 1970's. The business moved and after some time the building was demolished. The current building was built in the early 1980's by Tom Mohan and was originally known as Mohan Drugs. Ownership passed to Jamie Prokup and the name of the business changed to the La Plata Pharmacy. Due to its age it is **non-contributing** to the district.

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115-117 S Gex, Myron Sears Variety, circa 1909, Contributing

Rummerfield Antiques purchased the building in 1983 and it is currently for sale. However, this location was originally two separate storefronts. The original partitions and doors remain. The south shop's (117 S Gex) upper floor was originally a moving pictures dated circa 1909 and was possibly either the Lyric Theatre or the Electric Theatre. The lower floor was Myron Sears Variety/Racket store in 1916. The longest running business was Herbert Holmes Jewelry and Optometrist which operated from 1920 until 1962. During this time a small millinery ran out of the back of the shop. In 1962 Irene's Dress Shop occupied the building for several years before M&M Boutique purchased the location in 1976. It is assumed this business operated until shortly before or until Rummerfield purchased the building.

The north side of the building's (115 S Gex) first business was Frank Christie's Drug Store that operated from 1902 until 1938. This was soon occupied by another drug store, Rexall Drugs owned by Earl and Elaine Green who ran their business for twenty years. In 1959 Don's Gift Shop became a local hang out until its closure in the mid sixties. Dr. Durham D.O. stayed in this location briefly, likewise Dr. Ferrel Moots, D.O. had his practice here from 1971 until 1977. A few years after this, Rummerfield Antiques moved in.

119 S Gex, Sinn Jewelry and Millinery, circa 1909, Contributing

The earliest known business in this building is Sinn Jewelry and Millinery. According to Sanborn maps it was here from at least 1909. In the 1930's to the 1940's "Watt" Johnson Shoe Store occupied the building. What was here in between these times is unknown but in 1953 Bruce's Shoe store operated here until 1970. After a small gap the current occupant, Dr. James Furman, purchased the building in 1976 to run his chiropractor practice.

121 S Gex, Grand Leader, circa 1902, Contributing

This building was built sometime between 1900 and 1909. Grand Leader operated from this building in 1909. George Dodson Hardware was the next business in this location in 1916. It is unclear how long Dodson was in business or what the subsequent businesses were, however, the building remained commercial. In 1962 Rod and Dorothy Rogerson opened Rogerson's Hardware that operated until 1982. After this the building became a salon, first Nu-Art Beauty Salon and then the current business Studio 3 C Beauty Salon.

133 S Gex, Tansil and Grantges, 1921, Contributing

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For most of its life this building has housed Tansil and Grantges, a women's dress goods store. It was established in 1908 by L.E. Tansil Sr., L.E. Tansil Jr., and Frank Grantges. Due to increased profit, the business expanded in this location between 1908 and 1920. The building was lost in the 1920 La Plata fire. However the business was quick to recover and built the current building in the same location a mere year later. It sold in 1946 to C.L. Patterson and then in 1954 to H.M. Higgins dress goods and hats but carried on under the Tansil and Grantges name until 1966 when the store closed. A year later Moore's Department Store opened in this building and operated here for eleven years. At some point after 1977 the La Plata State bank purchased the building and currently uses it.

135 S Gex, Masonic Hall/La Plata State Bank, circa 1902, Contributing

According to the 1894, 1900, 1916, and 1928 Sanborn maps this building served as the location of the local Masonic Hall (who utilized the second floor). Today the impression of the Masonic emblem on the uppermost parapet, most likely removed in 1992 when the Masons moved from this location, is still visible.

La Plata State Bank, the current and most long-lived occupant of the building was established in 1932. It was the result of a consolidation of La Plata Savings Bank (est. in 1876 and incorporated in 1882), the Bank of La Plata, and Farmer and Merchants Bank, H.C. Surbeck acting at President. What the first floor of the building was used for prior to 1932 is unknown. However, the west portion of the building (facing West Sanders) has housed various businesses from doctors and lawyers to beauty salons.

201 S Gex, Dr. Ralph Gillett Practice, 1938, Contributing

This was the site of Dr. Ezekiel Keith's Drug store, which is rumored to be the first drug store on the square. At some point after this, the Sears Drug Store operated from this location before moving in 1873. This building was destroyed. In 1938 Dr. Ralph Gillett built the current building and operated his practice from this location until 1969. It is unclear what the building was used for after 1969 however it was purchased in the 1980's by a Dr. Karen Steele and Dr. Tom Steele who ran their practice until 1992. The building then switched hands to the La Plata Family Practice; Dr. Tod Sylvara is the primary doctor in this location.

209 S Gex, Marien's Bros. Grocers, circa 1920, Non-Contributing

Most likely built in the 1920's (Sanborn maps), the modern metal front on half of the building makes it **non-contributing** to the district. The businesses that have operated from this building are as follows: Marien's Bros. Grocers, 1930's to 1940's; Wilson's IGA, 1952; J.Burdman Auto Parts, 1980's; La Plata Home Press, 1990's to 2006. It is currently Smitty's Tavern.

213 S Gex, Clarence Haskell Grocery, circa 1920, Non-Contributing

This building was built between 1916 and 1928. Several businesses operated from this location: Clarence Haskell Grocery in the 1930's, The Rendezvous from 1948-1953, Newt's (both

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assumed to be a bar) in 1954 Smitty's Tavern from 1960 to the present. This side of the building is used for storage. Due to the change in roof-line it is **non-contributing** to the district.

215 S Gex, Annjes Inn, circa 1928, Contributing

According to Sanborn maps this building was built between 1916 and 1928. Several different businesses have worked out of this small building. Annjes Inn operated here from the 1930's until the 1940's. Lovingier Pool Hall operated here in the 1950's followed by Kinney Shoe Repair in the 1960's. Son Rise Ministries expanded and operated here from 1990 to 2006 before it was purchased with the Green Theatre in 2006.

217 S Gex, Shinn Hatcheries (original location), 1928, Contributing

This was originally the site of The Star Livery and Transfer Barn in 1898. By 1912 Gilbreath and Sacre had purchased the property they knew as The Star Feed and Transfer Barn. With the popularity of the automobile it became a garage known as the Star Oil Company in 1916. Although not stated, this building either burned down or was demolished to be replaced by Shin Hatcheries, operated by Wayne Shinn in 1928. In 1935, he moved his business to the north side of the square (104 N Gex, this building was demolished in 2008). A group of stockholders, namely a Virgil Green who desired a theatre for La Plata, purchased the building and in 1936 opened the Green Theatre to the public. The theatre ran for 26 years before it was sold to George and Inez Corrier in 1961. The Corriers continued the business until 1968.

The community tried to keep the Green Theatre open. Despite this, the building was sold to Rev. Barbara Clifton for use as a religious facility sometime in the 1970s. The Victory Temple religious organization occupied this building from 1988 to 2000. Ownership then passed briefly to Son Rise Ministries (circa 2000) before being purchased by Don White. After his death in 2005 the Friends for La Plata Preservation purchased the building. It is currently being restored.

225 S Gex, Arthur Green's Garage, circa 1928, Contributing

This building appears on the 1928 Sanborn map but not before. The earliest known business is Arthur Green's Garage that operated sometime in the 1930's. In 1940 it was the M.E. Belt Motor Co. and from 1950 to 1960 it was Hill Turkey Processing Plant. In 1960 to 1980 Gale L Moore and Son Sealtest Distribution operated from this building. Ownership then went to Mike Moore (it is unclear what if any business ran out of here at that time) and in 2000 Bryan Bane purchased the building and is currently using it for storage.

227 S Gex, Tonkinson and Harris Ford Dealership, circa 1910, Contributing

In 1862 this was the location of a blacksmith shop. The building either burned down or was demolished. The footprint for the current building did not appear on Sanborn maps until 1916. The first known business in this building was operated by Tonkinson and Harris who opened

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Tonkinson and Harris Ford Dealership in 1928. In 1941 the building became the home of La Plata Equipment Co owned by Don Crawford and Arthur Green. In 1960 sole ownership went to Don Crawford who operated Crawford Implement Co. The next business after Crawford Implement Co. was George Funk's La Plata Body Shop. Exactly when this business began to operate from this location is unknown (most likely in the 1970's) however it was in business until the 1990's. The property is currently owned by Roddy Bane who runs an auto repair shop.

229 S Gex, Blanchard Blacksmithing and Wagon Works, circa 1910, Contributing

The first recorded business in this building was Blanchard Blacksmithing and Wagon Works, owned by Scott and Budd Blanchard in 1933. By 1937 the business switched owners and Harvey and Son operated from this location. From 1970 to the early 1990's the Glen Harvey Shop ran from this address. It is currently owned by Roddy Bane but he does not appear to utilize his portion of the building.

302 S Gex, La Plata Oil Company, 1921, Contributing

Built in 1921, the La Plata Oil Company was the first service station in La Plata. Owen G. Bullock was one of the original promoters and managers of the company. He took over as the sole owner in 1935.²¹ The La Plata Oil Company ran throughout the 1950's and closed some time between 1960-1975. It is currently vacant.

304 S Gex, La Plata Oil Company Garage, circa 1930, Contributing

Built sometime after 1928 this garage was part of the La Plata Oil Company service station. It is currently vacant.

101 E Moore, The Famous, 1908, Contributing

This building dates from 1900 to 1908. A general merchandising store known as The Famous is the earliest recorded business dating from 1900, followed by The Fair Store in 1910. Through the twenties to early forties the building housed two hardware stores, Turner and Elgin's Hardware Store and Harley Hunsaker Hardware. Temple Stephens Company operated from here in the 1940's and 1950's. In the 60's and 70's, three music and/or furniture stores occupied this building: Bess Music Furniture, 1960; Collin Bros. & Music Furniture, 1961; and Collins Furniture in the 1970's. In the 1990's the Christian Clothing Store moved in and is currently occupying the building. The second floor was mostly used for offices. Most notably among them was Lester Dent's "Fiction Factory" in 1937. This was Lester Dent's downtown office where he wrote many of his Doc Savage publications.

103-105 E Moore, C.G. Wilson Grocery, 1908, Contributing

The west side of the building (103 E Moore) originally housed C.G. Wilson Grocery in 1909, Harry Norfolk's Meat Market in the 1920's, and Cull's Market in the 1930's. Turner

²¹ La Plata Home Press clipping, November 21, 1935, on file at Western Manuscripts

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Maytag operated out of the building in 1948. In 1961 it became Gross Maytag. The library moved to this location from City Hall in 1968.

115 E Moore, Bijou Barber Shop, 1908, Contributing

From 1910 until after 1920 a string of barbershops, mostly owned within a family, were in this location. First was Bijou Barber Shop owned by the Reynold's Brothers in 1910 then the North Side Barber Shop owned by the Myer's Brothers in 1913. It was the Ace and Art Perry Barber Shop in 1919. The final was owned by an individual, J.B. Roberts, who opened the Palace Barber Shop in 1920. In 1942 it was Quality Hardware store. How long it operated in this location is unknown. Although there is a gap, the Palace Café operated in this location in the 1980's. The city bought the building in 2004 and uses it to house the City Council Chambers and Municipal Court.

117 E Moore, North Side Milner, 1908, Contributing

Not much is known about this building. In 1910 it was the North Side Milliner owned by a Miss Julia Gupton. After this it was possibly a harness shop (according to Sanborn maps). It was Oscar Ferril Drug Co. in 1925. The use of this building after the drug store is not readily known until 1960 when it became Fashion Beauty Shop. This business lasted until the 1980's. The La Plata Police moved to this location in 2004 and presently occupies it.

119 E Moore, Maltbie and Holmes Jewelry Store, 1908, Contributing

The first and most notable business in this location was the Maltbie and Holmes Jewelry store. It moved to this location on December 4, 1908,²² following the fire that destroyed the northern part of the block of the square. The building was erected in the summer of 1908. Although there is some speculation about this, in June of 1918 the jewelry store moved yet again to into the old Reeseman building (123 E Moore). What is known for certain is that Holmes opened a separate business in what is now 117 S Gex in 1920 after serving in WWI in 1918. Maltbie shortly after went bankrupt. Holmes, along with his wife, ran a successful business for over forty years.

After Maltbie and Holmes moved from this location, Wright & Gash Gent's Clothing moved here in 1922. Paul R. Wright had his own clothing store here in 1938. In the 1940's and 1950's La Plata's famous son Lester Dent operated his aerial photography business from this location, "Lester Dent's Air Views." Through the 1960's and 1970's it was various clothing stores. Finally in the 1980's and 1990's it was a sports shop. The sports shop was first owned by Larry Bullock and then by Tom Phillips who now owns the building. It is currently vacant.

²² Home Press clipping, January 18, 1962, on file at Western Manuscripts

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120 E Moore, Lawrence Clem Grocery, 1908, Contributing

The earliest known business at this address is Lawrence Clem Grocery in the 1930's. Sometime after this it became Ray's Grocery. The next establishment in this location was S.B. McQuown's Bowling Alley in 1940. There is speculation that it was part of Bigg's Hatchery in the mid to late 1940's. After this period it was an insurance office and, in the 1990's, the Fashion Beauty Salon. It has since been vacant.

121 E Moore, McKim Residence, 1908, Contributing

This location has housed a range of industries. In 1909 this was the home of Joseph M. McKim, one of La Plata's earliest dentists. In the 1930's two bakeries operated from this address: Steven's Bakery and Ira Bruce's Bakery. In 1937 it was the Biggs Better Bred Baby Chicks, in 1948, Economy Gas Company, and a Western Auto Store in 1950. In the 1960's it was Bockenfield's True Value and then Hutchison's True Value. After this period it was various other businesses, the last was La Plata Discount Store that opened in 1983. It was privately owned until the late 1990's when the building was used for storage.

123 E Moore, Reeseman Building, 1908, Contributing

This building was known for many years as the "Reeseman Building". D.B. Reeseman opened his real estate and insurance business in the mid-1890's and continued to around 1915. There is some confusion to what other businesses were in this location, but Maltbie and Holmes Jewelry store may have been in this location from 1918 to 1919 or 1920. Despite this confusion, this building was consistently occupied. In the 1970's Belfield Insurance and Real Estate took ownership of the building and are still running their business there.

125 E Moore, Farmer's Café, circa 1909, Non-Contributing

Not much is known about the businesses that occupied this location. The Farmer's Café was in this building in 1915. It is not known how long the café was in business, however, the next documented trade in this location was the La Plata Speed Wash that ran its business in the 1950's until the 1970's. A drug store may have occupied this location earlier but it is unconfirmed. The current occupant, Christian Food Center, moved to this location in the 1990's. Due to the modern siding it is **non-contributing** to the district.

127-129 E Moore, M.F.A. Farmer's Exchange, circa 1909, Non-Contributing

According to 1916 Sanborn maps there was originally a tailor in this location (127 E Moore) and next to it (129 E Moore) a garage. The M.F.A. Farmer's Exchange is the most well-known and documented business in this location. It served the community from 1921 until the early 1940's. Many of the out buildings (out of the district boundaries) were original to this business and still

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retain their historic integrity. Unfortunately due to changes by various other businesses, the building has lost much of its historic identity, namely via changes to the fenestration and addition of modern siding thus it is considered **non-contributing** to the district. This building has housed predominately farming-oriented industries including the Farmer's Produce in 1944, M.F.A. Exchange in the 1960's, and Vandiver farm supply in the 1970's. It is currently Grandma's Home Cookin', the only restaurant currently on the square.

131 E Moore, Belt Grain Company, circa 1940, Contributing

This business dates from around the 1940's. It was originally Belt Grain Company and then was sold out to Quincy Soybean in 1970. It was recently sold to ADM which is the current owners of the plant. La Plata was and is known for its agricultural resources, especially soybeans. During its heyday in the 1960's and 1970's it was a major shipping point of soybeans in Northeast Missouri via the Wabash railroad.

202 E Moore, Wheatcraft Motor Company, 1924, Contributing

In the 1920's the automobile became more significant in American life. La Plata was at this time a booming center of commerce. It did not take long to realize there would be a market for this relatively new mode of transportation in the railroad town. In 1924, Wheatcraft Motor Company, a Chevrolet dealership, built this building on 202 E. Moore Street close to the original train depot. In addition to automobiles Wheatcraft also sold John Deere farming equipment to serve the still prominently agricultural community. Apparently this business had a measure of success as it operated until 1966. In 1967 it became the La Plata Equipment Company which operated from here until 1980. Various other small businesses operated from this location. Its current owners, Pete and Elsie Bangert, bought the building in the early 90's. Echoing the original business in this building "Bangart Farm Store" offers agricultural supplies to a still significantly agricultural community.

104 W Moore, Telephone Exchange, Date Unknown, Non-Contributing

It is uncertain when the current building was built, however La Plata's telephone exchange has been in this location since 1928 moving through several hands of ownership. Despite this, due to what appears to be modern construction or modern renovation (less than fifty years) it is **non-contributing** to the district.

119 W Moore, La Plata Fire Department, circa 1928, Contributing

This building appears on the 1928 Sanborn map. According to locals²³ this building has not changed since the early 1950's. Although its original use is unknown in the 1950's an addition was built to house a fire truck and the city jail in the rear of the building. It continued to house the La Plata Fire Department until 1991. The building is currently used by the City of La Plata for storage.

²³ La Plata Public meeting, August 30, 2007

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101-102 E Sanders, U.S. Post Office, 1937, Contributing

The cornerstone for the post office was laid in early December 1937. The dedication ceremony for the \$47,450 building was held at the Green Theatre (217 S Gex) with Lester Dent serving as the master of ceremonies. Previously the Post Office had been in various places around the public square. Plans to move it to its current location on East Sanders took place when it achieved status as a second class office on July 1, 1926.²⁴

126 E Sanders, Hill's Turkey Hatchery, circa 1928, Contributing

According to 1909 and 1916 Sanborn maps this was the location of a farm machinery warehouse. At the time only the east part of the building existed. From 1943 to 1969, Hills Turkey Hatchery operated from this location. Sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s the business for the hatchery doubled and a new west side was built. After the hatchery a TV & appliance store moved in followed by a Gamble Store, an insurance business. Finally in 1980 David Christy bought the building to open Christy's Auction House which is currently in business today.

119 W Sanders, Dr. C.H. Bulkley Practice, circa 1909, Contributing

According to Sanborn maps this building was built between 1909 and 1916. Not much is known about this building other than Dr. C.H. Bulkley worked from this location sometime after the 1908 fire destroyed the north side of the square. Dr. Harold Lehr ran his practice from here from 1951 to 1976. The current business, Long Branch Dental Group (Dr. Del Gregory), occupied the building in 1996.

123 W Sanders, Ray Bruce Cleaning, circa 1900, Contributing

Built between 1900 and 1909 various businesses, mostly to do with clothing care, used this location. According to Sanborn maps in 1909 a laundry service was in this building, in 1916 a tailor, and in 1928 a pressing business. Beginning in 1927 until the 1940's, Ray Bruce Cleaning operated in this building followed by La Plata Cleaners in the 1960's. Periodically this building has been used for residential purposes however it recently returned to commercial. Farmer's Mutual Insurance (Roger J. Jarman) now operates from this building.

Conclusion

Although many of these buildings are now vacant and a few have lost integrity, the La Plata Public Square remains largely intact. These buildings continuously housed various trades,

²⁴ Home Press clipping, October 14, 1937, on file at Western Manuscripts

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services, and entertainment venues that changed over the years to fit the needs of the community. Automobile-related industries for instance became a more prominent feature on the square in the 1920s replacing the conventional horse or mule-related businesses. However, there were a few long standing businesses that remained in the same building for an extended period of time such as the La Plata State Bank building on 135 S Gex (1932-present) and the Home Press building on 107 N Gex (1877-1995).

The two rail stations on or close to the town square played an important role in the small community's commercial success. They attracted successful exporters like Shinn Hatcheries and Belt Fur and Wool Company and were also a hub for raw agricultural goods like soybeans that were shipped nation wide and in some cases internationally. These businesses, although very profitable, were the minority on the square as most of the trades and services focused on local citizens. Movie theatres, taverns, doctors, trade-stores, societies, and government bodies served the everyday needs of the citizens of La Plata since the town's platting in 1855.

Like many small towns, La Plata's commercial center saw a general decline as strip malls and other corporate ventures lured citizens to shop at nearby larger towns. By the 1980's businesses began to dwindle and by the late 1990's many of the buildings became vacant or used for storage.

While the public square is much diminished in its commercial viability, the buildings surrounding the square serve as a standing reminder of the trades and services that endured here for over a 100-year period.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, La Plata, 1909, on file at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form—Dent, Lester and Norma House

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form---Donegthy, John T, and Mary M House

AMTRAK Passenger Station file

La Plata General Architecture file

Green Theatre Site file

Shinn Hatchery/Green Theatre file

Green Theatre Correspondence file

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Macon County, MO**

UTM References (Continued)

5. 1/5 5/4/3/3/1/9 4/4/3/0/1/7/4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries are as shown on the attached scaled map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes those commercial properties historically associated with commerce surrounding and including the La Plata Public Square that have retained historic integrity. The boundaries extend a block south of the square on S Gex Street to include commercial properties that have retained integrity. Likewise the district boundaries extend a block west on West Sanders and West Moore streets and a block north on N Gex. Finally the boundaries extend a block east on W Moore to include a single building. These properties are historically associated with services, recreation, and trades bordering and including the city park. The loss of integrity, historic use, and demolition has prevented the district from extending further in each direction

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Photo Log

Photographers: Tiffany Patterson and Michelle Diedrich
June 2007

Negatives available at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office

Photo #1: Public Square looking southeast

Photo #2: South Gex Street looking northwest (digital)

Photo #3: South Gex Street looking southeast

Photo #4: South Gex Street looking east

Photo #5: North Gex Street looking southeast (the building to left has since been demolished)

Photo #6: Moore Street looking north (digital)

Photo #7: 131 East Moore looking north

Photo #8: 115 East Moore looking north

Photo #9: 202 East Moore looking east (digital)

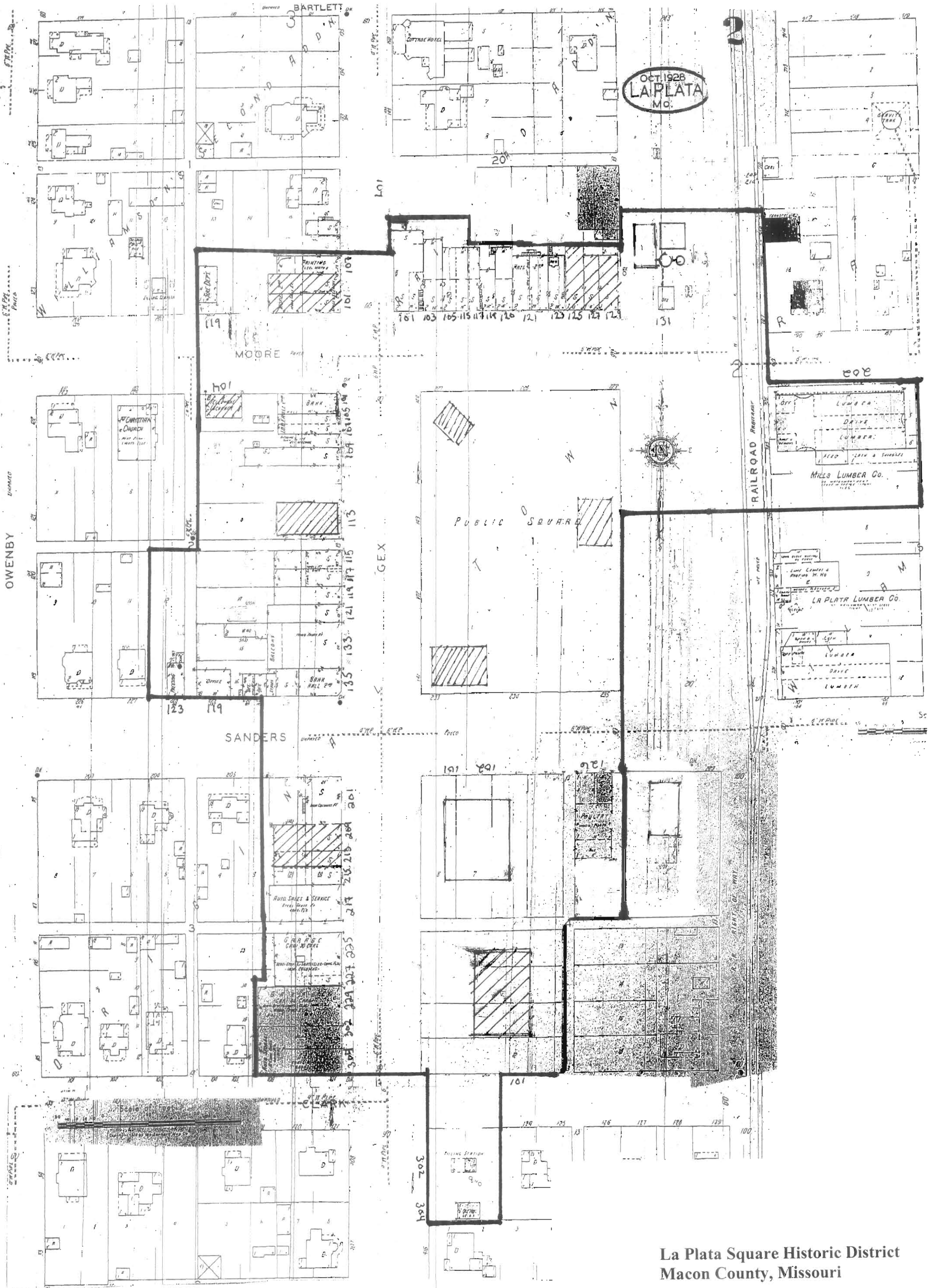
Photo #10: 135 South Gex looking northwest (digital)

Photo #11: 126 East Sanders looking south (digital)

Photo #12: 217 South Gex looking west (digital)

Photo #13: 302 South Gex looking east (digital)


Photo #14: 101-102 East Sanders looking south (digital)



**La Plata Square Historic District
Macon County, Missouri**

Scale: One inch = 100 feet

Boundary: 

Non-Contributing: 

La Plata Square
Historic District
La Plata, Macon
County, MO

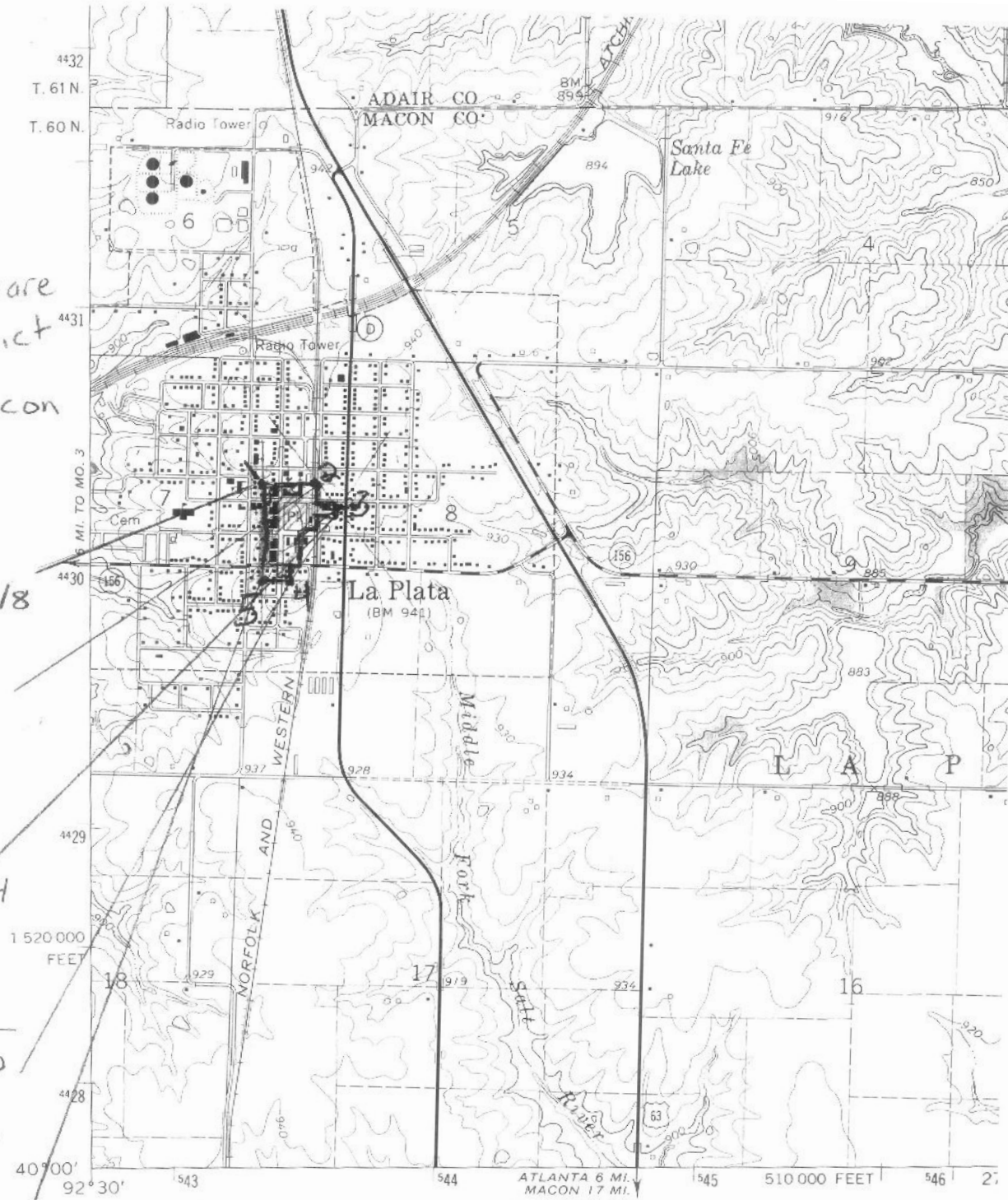
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zone Easting
4/4/3/0/5/4/19
Northing

2. 1/5 5/4/3/5/0/5
zone Easting
4/4/3/0/5/4/16
Northing

3. 1/5 5/4/3/5/9/14
zone Easting
4/4/3/0/4/5/2
Northing

4. 1/5 5/4/3/4/2/10
zone Easting
4/4/3/0/1/7/4
Northing

5. 1/5 5/4/3/3/1/1/1
zone Easting
4/4/3/0/1/7/4
Northing



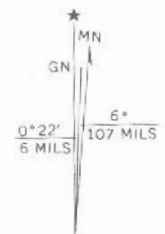
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

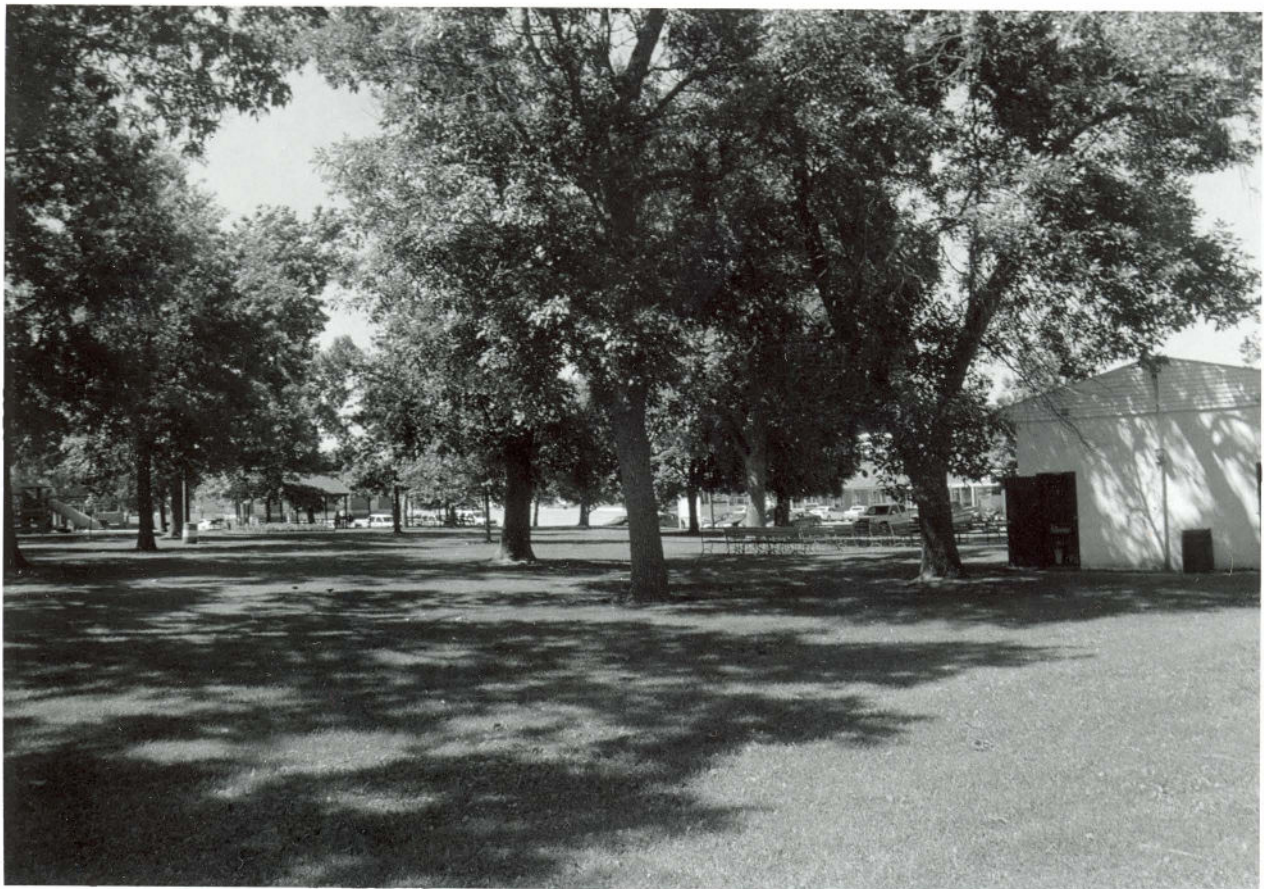
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1966

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Missouri coordinate system, central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue

Five red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



UTM GRID AND 1966 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET





La Plaine
STATE
BANK

La Plaine State Bank

CHIROPRACTIC OFFICE

DENTIST

La Plaine

No Bicycles







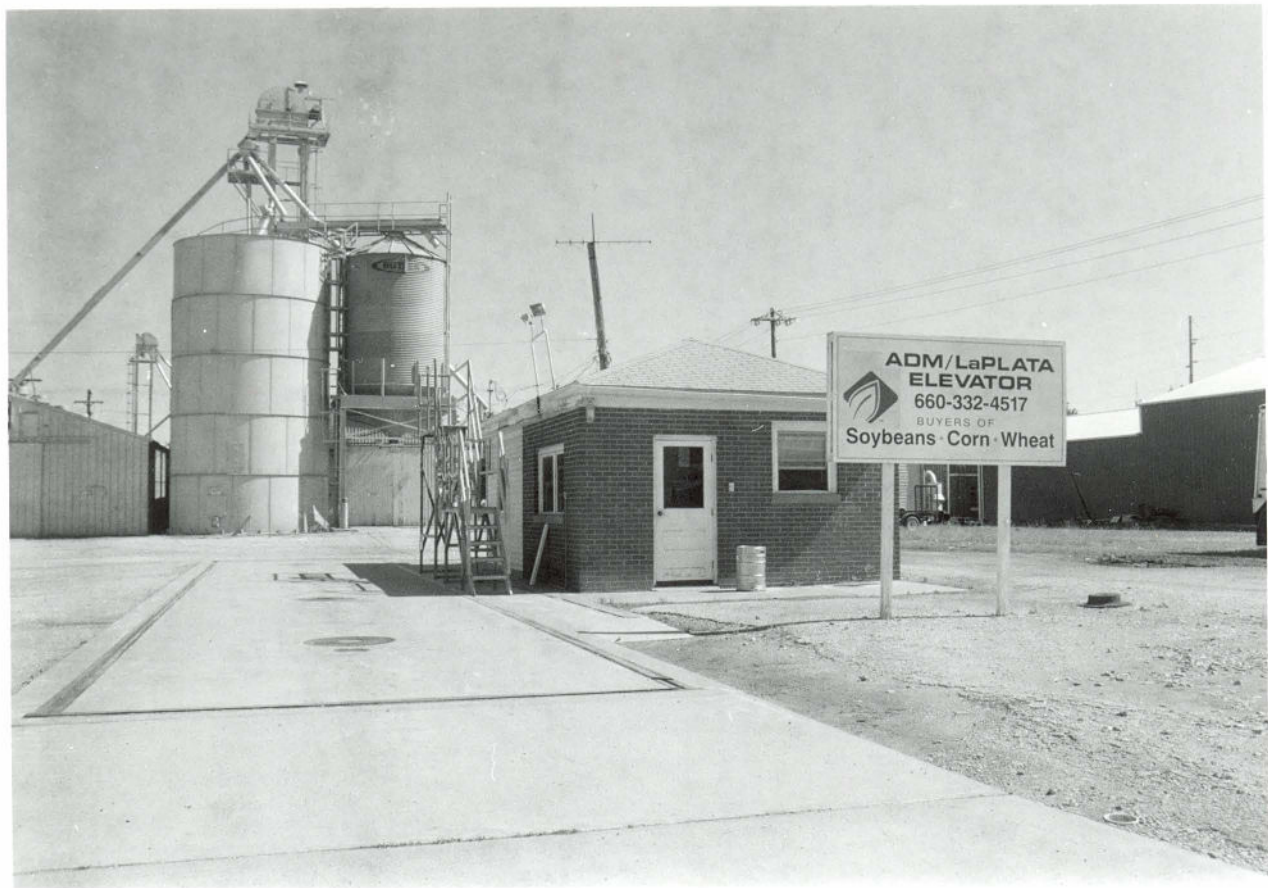


SPORT SHOP

NO LITTERING

LIBRARY

Think Green



**ADM/LaPLATA
ELEVATOR**
660-332-4517
BUYERS OF
Soybeans · Corn · Wheat



 Bangert Farm Store

WATER PUMP
RETAIL

Mu-Mie
TIRE S
BANGERT FARM SUPPLY





La Plata
STATE
BANK



CHRISTY'S

AUCTION

CHRISTY'S
AUCTION
HOUSE

126







LAPLATA OIL CO.

