

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Major Hotel

other name/site number: Colonial Hotel; Franklin House Apartments

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2. Location

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street & number: 112 East Franklin Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Liberty

vicinity: N/A

state: MO

county: Clay

code: 047

zip code: 64068

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri"

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification  
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this   x   nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   x   meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria.        See continuation sheet.

Claire F. Blackwell

9 November 1992

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

=====  
5. National Park Service Certification  
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

       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): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
of Action

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic: Domestic  
Commerce/Trade

Sub: Hotel  
Restaurant

Social  
Current : Domestic

Meeting Hall  
Sub: Multiple Dwelling

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7. Description  
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Architectural Classification:

Prairie School  
Colonial Revival

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Limestone roof Asphalt  
walls Brick other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance  
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: Commerce  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1912 - 1942

Significant Dates : 1912 1934 1987

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Keene & Simpson, Architects  
Huggins Construction, Builders

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

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 -- Specify Repository: Clay County Archives (Liberty, MO)

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>377595</u>	<u>4344950</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of East Franklin and Missouri Streets, proceed west 98.5' along the right-of-way of East Franklin; then proceed 160' north; then proceed 98.5' east; then proceed 160' south along the right-of-way of Missouri Street to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

The boundaries are based on the current legally recorded lot lines that have historically been associated with the resource.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Deon K. Wolfenbarger

Organization: Three Gables Preservation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Street & Number: 9550 NE Cookingham Drive Telephone: 816/792-1275

City or Town: Liberty State: MO ZIP: 64068

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Section number 7

Major Hotel

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**SUMMARY:** The Major Hotel is located at 112 East Franklin in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. The building was constructed in 1912, and adapts Prairie style architectural elements to a vernacular hotel form. It is a three-story, rectangular brick building on a stone foundation, with a one-story, flat-roof brick ell addition on the northwest, rear corner. The low-pitched, hip roof has wide, overhanging eaves with shed-roof dormers on the east and west roof slopes. Situated on the corner of Missouri and East Franklin streets, it features two entrances, each with a flat-roof porch with square brick columns. A drive on the west leads from East Franklin to a parking area at the rear of the building. Although partially damaged by fire in 1934, it was rebuilt as originally designed, and thus retains its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, as well as association, feeling, location and setting.

**ELABORATION:** The Major Hotel was built in 1912 on the northwest corner lot at the intersection of Missouri and East Franklin streets, not quite one block from the square. Although conservative in its design, elements of the Prairie style can be found in the long horizontal lines of the shallow pitched roof with its wide, overhanging eaves, the flat roofs of the entry porches, and the long wrap-around brick porch balustrade highlighted with horizontal stone details.

The rectangular brick building is ten bays long on the east and west elevations, and three bays wide on the north and south. The south facade is divided into three portions, with the central portion of four bays being slightly recessed. The corners of this recessed portion, as well as the corners of the building, are accented with brick quoins. The foundation, partially exposed on the west, south, and east, is of quarry-faced, random ashlar limestone, and extends to serve as the porch foundation as well.

The low-pitched hip roof of composition shingles has wide, overhanging enclosed eaves, and a wide wood cornice. Low-pitched, shed roof dormers are situated on the east and west slopes. The dormers each have two, single-pane windows. On the rear (west) elevation, an exterior brick chimney extends from the ground level through the overhanging eave on the northwest roof corner.

Primary entrances are located on both the south and east facades. On the south, the door is centrally located, and is flanked by two windows. The door surround had fluted wood pilasters and a

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broken pediment above. A one-story, full-length veranda porch covers the south end of the building. It has a flat roof with a wide, wood entablature set on four square brick columns. A brick baluster is capped with stone, and wraps around the southeast corner to form a patio along Missouri Street. It joins with an identical porch in the central portion of the east facade. Both entrances have concrete steps and sidewalks leading from the streets to the porches, and feature non-historic iron railings.

The windows are simple, one-over-one, double-hung wood sash, except for the first story windows on the two primary elevations (south and east). Here, the windows also have a simple rectangular transom above. On the primary elevations, the first and second story windows have simple, rectangular stone sills and lintels, while all other windows have only the stone sills. The east elevation is further differentiated with slightly smaller windows on the second and third floors in the center of the north and south portions of the facade.

A one-story brick addition forms an ell on the northwest corner of the rear (west) elevation. This flat-roofed section, originally the kitchen, has an entry door on the south, with a concrete ramp and iron railing leading to it.

The lot is slightly elevated from the street, and slopes up from the sidewalk. The building has the same set-back from the street as the adjacent residential properties. Mature deciduous trees are on the south, as is a drive which leads from East Franklin to a parking area on the rear.

A major fire in August of 1934 destroyed many buildings in Liberty, and the local newspaper noted the Major Hotel as being "badly burned" (Liberty Tribune, 16 August 1934). However, historic photographs taken just after the fire reveal that the exterior walls remained in good condition (Jackson, 1976), and a newspaper article a few weeks later noted plans "To Remodel Hotel Major" (30 August 1934). The article spoke of plans to add bathrooms to the original building, and "other improvements that will make this a first-class hotel in every respect." However, the building permit taken out in October of 1934 made no mention of interior remodeling (Building Permit, 5 October 1934). The only specific item cited was a roof. As the total estimate was \$9000.00 for "Repairs", it is probable that more than just a roof replacement was involved. Remodeling of the interior probably occurred at this time, but the exterior appearance of the hotel retains its integrity from its date of construction in 1912.

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In 1987, the Major Hotel was converted from a residential hotel to a 21-unit apartment building. At present, there is little evidence that any significant interior features have been retained, as all interior walls and woodwork have been replaced.



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Major Hotel

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**SUMMARY:** The Major Hotel is significant under Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE, and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. In the area of COMMERCE, it is representative of the period of commercial expansion in Liberty in and around the square, which occurred from around the Civil War to the early twentieth century (see MPS "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri: The Courthouse Square in Liberty, 1858-1940"). Liberty had three other hotels at one time, but by the turn of the century, had lost all of them. Commercial entrepreneurs in Liberty joined forces to bring the Major Hotel to the community by forming a stock company of local citizens, which raised the capital to construct the Major Hotel in 1912. Although it served local citizens with a restaurant and as a "semi-family hotel" (Liberty Tribune, 20 December 1912), the Major was the only commercial hotel in Liberty and primarily provided accommodations and display areas for the army of traveling salesmen, or drummers, who serviced the businessmen of the town. In the area of ARCHITECTURE, it is a good example of an early twentieth century hotel whose form and style reflect its small-town, midwestern roots. It was designed in 1912 by the Kansas City architectural firm of Keene & Simpson. Their work was noted for its "conservative design, adapted however, to the changing patterns of the times." (Kansas City Star, 15 December 1961). In the design of the Major Hotel, the architects utilized an eclectic mix of elements from prevailing domestic styles--Prairie and Colonial Revival--and transposed them onto a basic vernacular hotel form. Although damaged by fire in 1934, the exterior remained intact. The interior was quickly remodeled, and the hotel remained an important fixture in Liberty. Its period of significance extends from 1912 to 1942, the arbitrary fifty-year limit.

**ELABORATION:** The construction of the Major Hotel in 1912 was the result of the efforts of an organization of public-spirited citizens of Liberty. Liberty's commercial economy at this time was stable (see Multiple Property Submission "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri"). A wide variety of businesses which were necessary to small-town life were found in and around the square. However, due to a number of forces, there were no longer any hotels in the town just after the turn of the century. The frame Green Hotel, located at the southeast corner of the intersection of N. Water and E. Franklin streets, was torn down in 1888 to make way for a more "modern" commercial building. The Thompson House was actually just the second story of a commercial structure on the southwest corner of E. Kansas and S. Main streets, and again made way for a new commercial building around the turn of the century. The Arthur House, the most significant hotel in Liberty, was a three-story building on the southeast corner of E. Kansas and S. Water streets. It was built in 1853, and for many years was a well-known landmark in northwest Missouri. When it burned in 1903, it left Liberty without a commercial hotel (Jackson, 1976).

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Through the work of primarily the Liberty Commercial Club, a company was shortly organized to secure a hotel for Liberty (Withers, 1922). The company started with \$15,500 of capital stock, and secured another \$15,000 through a loan (Liberty Tribune, 24 May 1912). The total amount raised, approximately \$30,000, allowed for purchase of the site, the construction and the furnishing of the hotel.

The company reviewed plans submitted by several architects before deciding on the Kansas City firm of Keene and Simpson (Liberty Tribune, 29 March 1912, 24 May 1912). The Huggins Construction company of Kansas City was the general contractor. The firm was already respected in Liberty for their construction of the dormitory at William Jewell College (Liberty Tribune, 21 June 1912). Most work was completed in November of 1912, but the formal opening of the hotel, complete with a dinner and extensive program, did not occur until January 31, 1913 (Withers, 1922). Featuring thirty rooms and ten bathrooms, it was the site of many important social and community events in Liberty, including Liberty's Centennial Ball in 1922 (Liberty Tribune, 24 February 1922).

Having the only commercial hotel accommodations in Liberty, the Major Hotel obviously played a key role in housing traveling salesmen. Drummers, as they were also known, were important components to commerce in small Midwestern towns (Atherton 1954). In bringing the latest products to town, they required rooms to display their wares. Just prior to the opening of the Major Hotel, a newspaper article described the features which would make the building attractive to these salesmen.

In the basement the rooms have been finished and have been made very attractive. A large room in the basement on the west side at the main entrance to this apartment of the hotel has been built for a cafe. Other rooms have been finished with the view for sample rooms for traveling men. (Liberty Tribune, 20 December 1912).

However, the Major Hotel did not cater only to out-of-town salesmen or visitors. The same newspaper article noted that "A number of Liberty people expect to take rooms at the hotel, and the wisdom of choosing a suitable location and having a semi-family hotel will be proven." (Ibid.) The Hotel became well known for its dining room, and Sunday dinner at the Major was a "must" for local residents. During the thirties, several well-known people in Liberty made their homes in the hotel (Jackson, 1976). The combination of providing rooms for traveling

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salesmen, rental housing for local residents, and being the site of a popular restaurant and local meeting room made the Major Hotel a significant part of Liberty's economy for many years.

One of the worst fires in Liberty's history occurred in August of 1934. Almost an entire business block was destroyed, and the Major Hotel was damaged (Liberty Tribune, 16 August 1934). However, plans were quickly made to remodel the damaged building, adding more bathrooms and other interior improvements at this time. By the first week in September, the contract for the work was already let, and the Major Hotel was soon back in business (Liberty Tribune, 30 August 1934). It remained an important fixture in the community for several decades.

In addition to its association with the commercial development of Liberty, the Major Hotel is significant as a good example of the conservative work of the Kansas City architectural firm of Keene & Simpson. The firm was founded in 1909, and by 1961 was the oldest active architectural still practicing in the city. Their most prominent works in Kansas City included the Jackson County Courthouse, the Scottish Rite Temple, and the City National bank building. They were also responsible for the design for the state office building in Jefferson City and the Piltower building in Tulsa.

The Major Hotel is a simple rectangular hotel form, to which the architects added elements of two residential styles which were popular at the time of construction. From the Prairie style, several features of the hotel emphasize horizontality, noticeable particularly at the cornice line and in the contrast between the brick porch railing and Carthage stone cap. Classical elements, popular with the Colonial Revival style, are found in the quoin decorations on the buildings corner, and the classically inspired door surround on the south entry. As the building was located just off the square, this deliberate use of contemporary residential building styles helped the structure "bridge the gap" between the commercial buildings on the square, and the residential neighborhoods which surrounded it. Also, since the Hotel served as rented living quarters for many residents in Liberty, the residential detailing helped give the building its "semi-family" feeling.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Alexander Doniphan Chapter, D.A.R. Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir, 1822-1922. Liberty, MO.: Liberty Tribune, 1922.

Atherton, Lewis. Main Street on the Middle Border. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954.

Building Permit, #176. Liberty City Hall: 5 October 1934.

Jackson, Don M., and Wymore, Jack B. The Heritage of Liberty. Liberty, MO.: R.C. Printing Services, 1976.

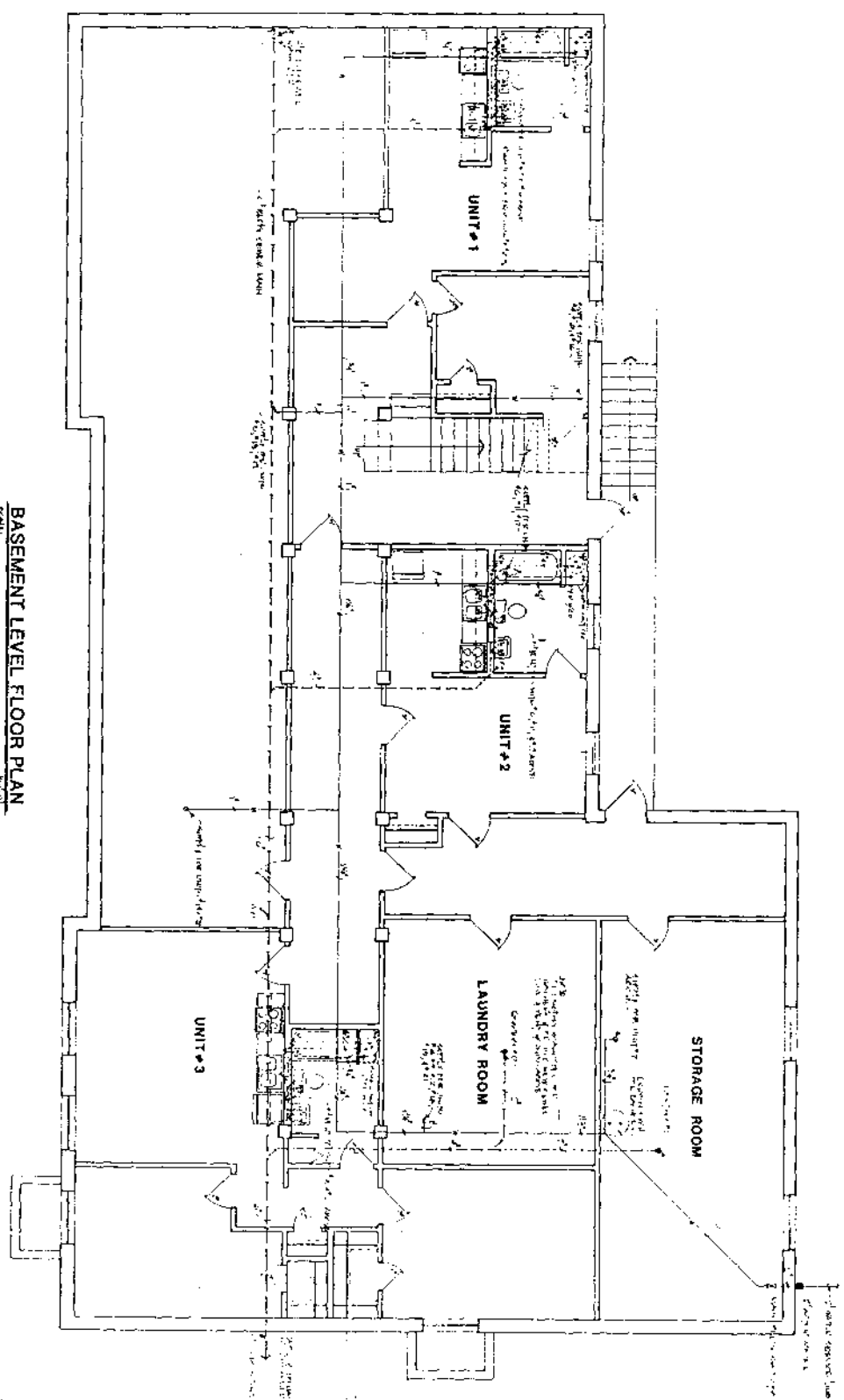
Liberty Tribune. 29 March 1912, 24 May 1912, 21 June 1912, 29 November 1912, 6 December 1912, 20 December 1912, 24 February 1922, 16 August 1934, 30 August 1934.

Kansas City Star, 15 December 1961.

Withers, Ethel Massie, ed. Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir, 1822-1922. Liberty, MO.: Liberty Tribune, 1922.

**PLUMBING NOTES**

1. ALL PLUMBING SHALL BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE KANSAS PLUMBING CODE AND THE KANSAS SANITATION CODE. THE PLUMBING SHALL BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE KANSAS PLUMBING CODE AND THE KANSAS SANITATION CODE. THE PLUMBING SHALL BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE KANSAS PLUMBING CODE AND THE KANSAS SANITATION CODE.

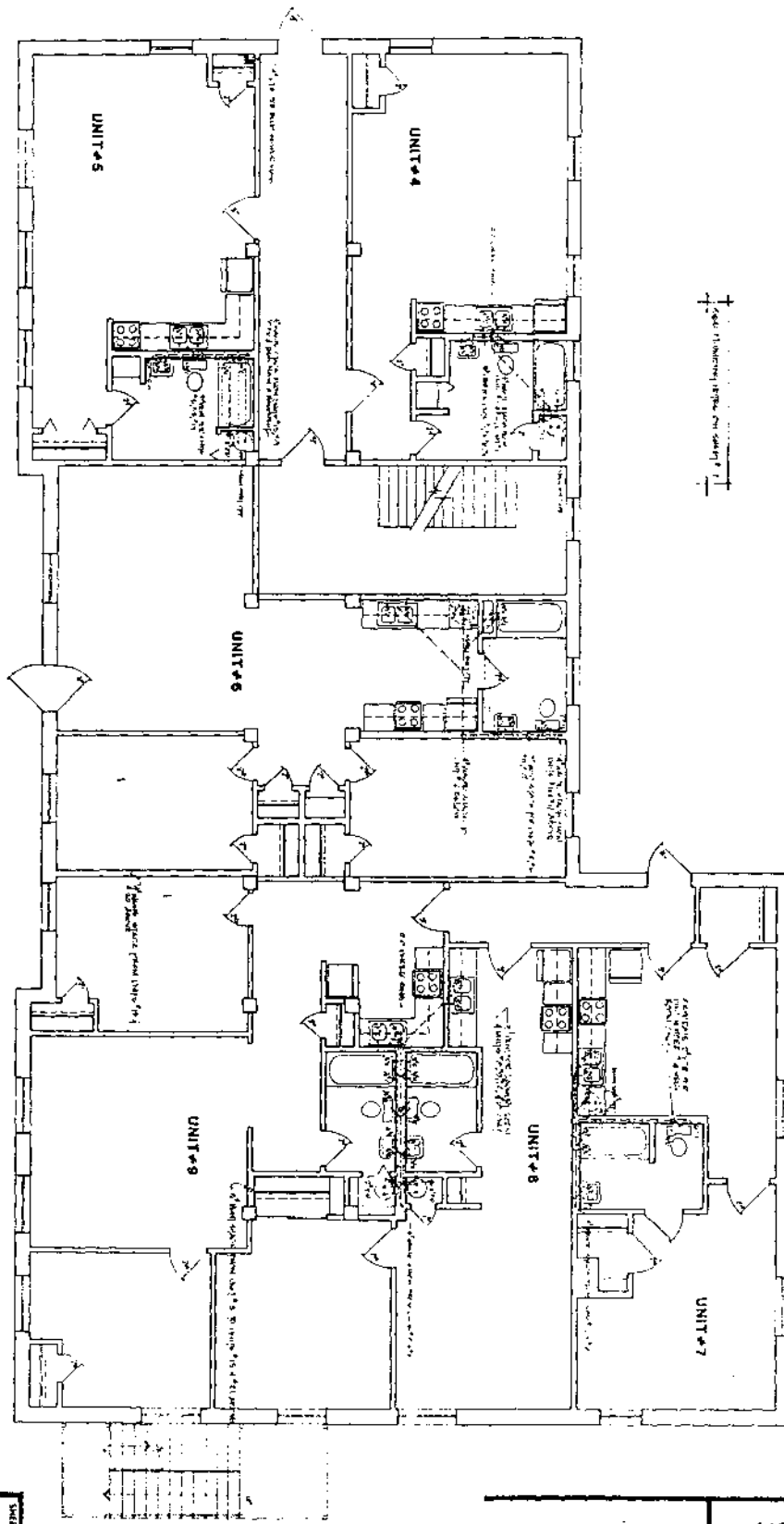


**BASMENT LEVEL FLOOR PLAN**  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

**PLUMBING PLAN**

The General Contractor, others to whom it should be referred, shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the plumbing and sanitary fixtures shown on this plan. The General Contractor shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the plumbing and sanitary fixtures shown on this plan. The General Contractor shall be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the plumbing and sanitary fixtures shown on this plan.

SHEET NUMBER <b>7</b> JOB NO. B-33	<b>FRANKLIN HOUSE APARTMENTS</b> <b>FOR HOWARD L. MILLER</b> <b>VERN A. NELSON ARCHITECT AND ASSOCIATES</b>	112 E. FRANKLIN LIBERTY, MO. <b>KANSAS CITY</b>	DATE OF DRAWING DATE ISSUED
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FIRST LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

PLUMBING PLAN

UNIT	8
NO.	86-33

FOR HOWARD L. MILLER

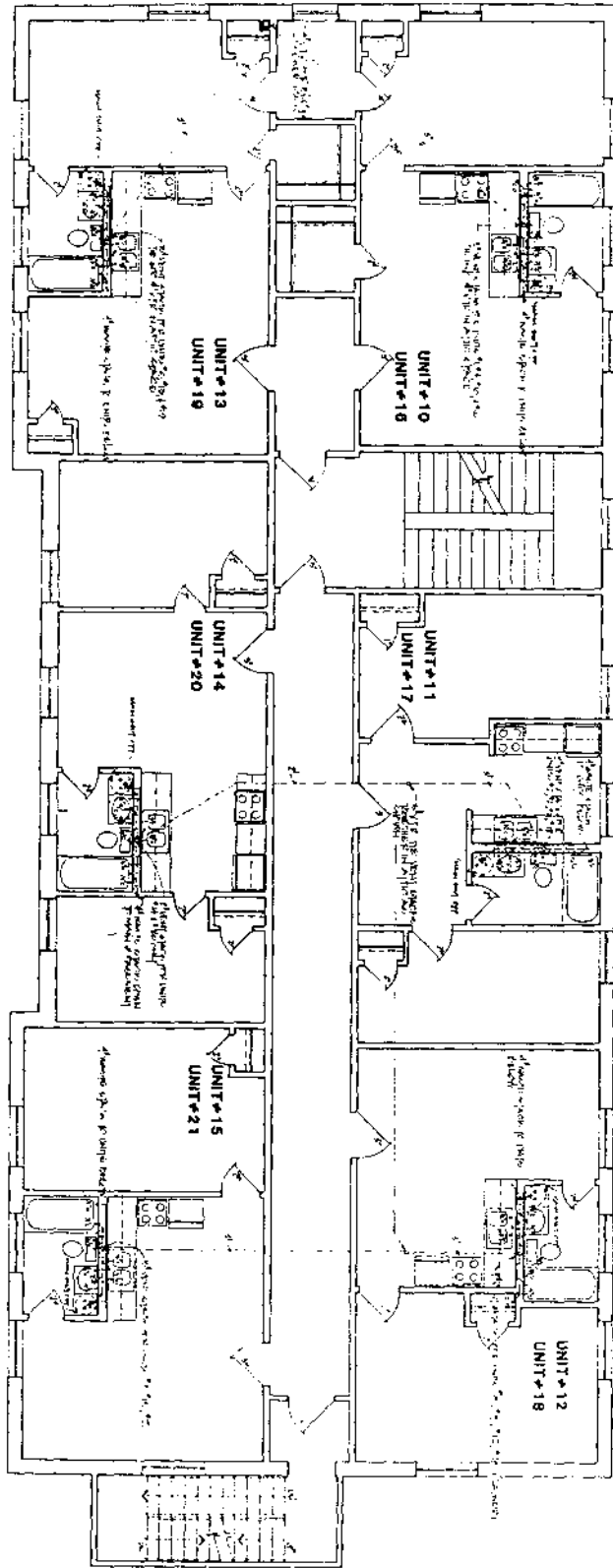
112 E. FRANKLIN  
LIBERTY, MO.

**VERN A. NELSON** ARCHITECT AND ASSOCIATES

SUITE 3-A MARKADE BUILDING  
4420 WEST SEVENTY-SEVENTH STREET  
SHAWNEE MISSION, KANSAS 66204  
TELEPHONE A.C. 912-831-0900

**KANSAS CITY**  
DRAWN BY  
ISSUED BY





SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE

PLUMBING PLAN

9  
SCALE

FRANKLIN HOUSE APARTMENTS  
 FOR HOWARD L. MILLER

112 E. FRANKLIN  
 LIBERTY, MO.

**VERN A. NELSON** ARCHITECT AIA  
 AND ASSOCIATES

SUITE 314 MARKER BUILDING  
 6750 WISE SEVENTY-FIFTH STREET  
 SHAWNEE MISSION, KANSAS 66204  
 TELEPHONE 816-931-1920

**KANSAS CITY**  
 DATE DRAWN \_\_\_\_\_ DRAWN BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE ISSUED \_\_\_\_\_ CHECKED BY \_\_\_\_\_

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The following information is the same for all photographs listed below:

LOCATION OF SITE: Major Hotel at 112 East Franklin Street, Liberty, MO  
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Bob Askren  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 19 December 1991  
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO

List of Photographs

1. Southeast elevation.
2. Front (south) elevation.
3. Southwest elevation.
4. Interior view of main entry hall, looking north from front door.











