

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 Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House

other name/site number St. John Neumann House

2. Location

street & town 3741 Washington Avenue n/a not for publication

city or town St. Louis n/a vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63108

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 June 10, 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) _____

Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(check only one box)

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

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

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

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ single dwelling

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/ business

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/ not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN Second Empire

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls brick

wood

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

Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], MO
County and State

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.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

n/a

Significant Dates

1880

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

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

1 11S 71410171610 4121810151010
Zone Easting Northing

2 1 1111111 1111111
Zone Easting Northing

3 1 1111111 1111111
Zone Easting Northing

4 1 1111111 1111111
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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 Michael Allen, Section Seven; Lindsey Derrington, Section Eight

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date January 25, 2008

street & number 917 Locust Street 7th Floor telephone 314-421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101

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 Redemptorist Fathers

street & number PO Box 300399 telephone _____

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80203

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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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

Summary

Built in 1880, the Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House stands at 3741 Washington Avenue in the Midtown neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri (see photograph 1). The Wetzell House is a brick, three-story Second Empire residence with two story rear wing. The three-story front section is formally executed, with a defined base, body and crown. The crown consists of a projecting bracketed cornice and mansard-roofed third floor. The roof is flat. The rear wing is set back from the west but projects to the east, making it visible from the front. It features a half-pitched roof running laterally, and a side gabled roof over the east projection. Detailing is simpler on this section. Inside, the home has been remodeled and the original floor plan is barely evident in some sections. However, the first floor retains its original front double parlors, and the home's staircase retains the original balustrade. Some replacement or cladding of historic materials has occurred, but overall the house demonstrates the integrity of its historic character. The house adjoins a concrete block building built in 1946, but the buildings are no longer connected.

Setting

The Wetzell House is located on Washington Avenue. At the time of construction, this street was a sparsely-settled residential setting. In the years after the house's construction, the street became dense with large single-family residences. Prior to the revival style wave that arrived in the early 1890s, these homes were designed primarily in the Italianate and Second Empire styles and were typified by generous setbacks from the street and from each other. In the twentieth century, the neighborhood's needs changed and more commercial activity came to Washington Avenue. Storefronts were built or added to existing homes and larger buildings were built and the older homes were demolished. Today, this section of Washington is marked by two contemporary cast-concrete museum buildings across the street from the Wetzell House (the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis), numerous surface parking lots and a line of three historic buildings that includes the Wetzell House, the Pendennis Club Apartment Building (1901-1902) and another house, the Frederick Newton Judson House (National Register pending, 1892). The setting is urban, but in a much different way than when the Wetzell House was built.

Exterior

The front elevation of the house is divided into three bays. The first floor windows have round arches, while the basement and second floor windows have segmental arches. All windows on the building have been replaced by one-over-one double-hung aluminum windows, save the basement windows which are now paired-sash sliding windows. The westernmost (left) bay features a column of window openings at the basement, first and second floors. The

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

basement window opening extends above the stone water table into the brick body of the house. This window opening and all others on the front elevation have a continuous surround of two rowlock courses with the outer course projecting slightly. The first floor window has a wooden sill wrapped in aluminum that does not extend to meet the rowlock courses, while the second floor window sill extends to support the surround. Likely, the first floor sill is not original. The center bay is similar to the westernmost, save that the second floor window extends downward to the level of the floor; interior and exterior evidence shows that this was originally a door or Jefferson window that led to a removed cast iron balcony. This opening now has a replacement wooden sill wrapped in aluminum. In the easternmost (right) bay concrete replacement steps rise to the entrance. The entrance opening is wide with a round arched head and the rowlock surround found on the windows (see photograph 2). Inside of the entrance, wooden paneling lines the sides and ceiling. Doubled wooden braiding frames the arched outer door opening, which is composed of two wooden doors that can be opened and locked flush against the side walls of the vestibule. Paneling and another arch of wooden braiding frame the front door, which is paneled with an oval window. Above this entrance is a window opening with wide, bracketed limestone sill and segmental arch.

Above the second floor is a wooden cornice (see photograph 3). Currently, most of the cornice is wrapped in aluminum and painted to look like wood; whether or not the wood under the aluminum is original is unknown. The profile consists of an architrave, an ogee molding, and then a second architrave from which extends wooden brackets that support the ogee molding that conceals the guttering of the mansard roof. The wooden brackets appear to be replacement, but their spacing matches the original appearance of the cornice. The only detail not approximated today is the original beading that ran on the lowest architrave. Above the cornice, three front-gabled dormers carry the bay divisions. These are wrapped in aluminum and carry one-over-one windows. The mansard roof is clad in dark asphalt shingles.

On the east elevation, the lower wall is blind. Centered between two capped chimneys at the third floor are two dormers of the same configuration as on the primary elevation. This wall forms an ell with the front elevation of the rear wing. This elevation features two windows on the second floor centered over a window and door opening on the first floor. The door opening carries a replacement steel door. The order of arches, rowlock surround and sills from the front elevation of the house is carried over to this wing, although the openings are significantly smaller. A wooden cornice at the top of the elevation extends eastward. The eastern wall of the wing is blind.

On the third floor of the western elevation of the main section of the house, two dormers are centered between two capped chimneys (see photograph 4). Below the cornice, a column of windows on the first and second floors is located at the northern end. A second column centered under the southernmost dormer runs from the basement through the second floor. These windows have simple wooden sills clad in aluminum and segmental arches. On the northern (rear) elevation of the front section of the house, the third floor features three dormers configured like those on the front elevation. A column of windows runs from the basement through second floors at the western side of this elevation.

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

The western elevation of the wing is divided into three bays with each featuring a window at the basement, first and second floors. The exception is the middle bay, which features a doorway at the first floor level accessible by concrete steps. The doorway carries a replacement steel door. The basement windows are infilled with brick. A dentillated cornice runs across this elevation. The northern elevation is obscured completely by the later addition.

Interior

Upon entering the front door of the Wetzell Home, one enters the original entrance hall (see Figure 1). A wooden staircase retains its original balustrade with newell posts, handrails and turned balusters intact from the first through the third floors (see photograph 5). Under the stairs is original wooden paneling. The entrance hall retains original wooden baseboards and door casements. The floor here and throughout the house (save bathrooms and the kitchen) is carpeted. Through a door from the hall is the front parlor. The parlor retains a plaster ceiling medallion and a carved wooden mantel probably installed in the circa 1898 remodeling of the home (see photograph 6). Crown molding in the room may be original. The baseboards and window casements are not original. This parlor is connected via a large door opening (probably once carrying pocket doors) to the second parlor, which retains little original features. The rest of the first floor reflects substantial alteration to the floor plan, although some original millwork is evident around windows and doors. A staircase running under the main stairs to the basement leads to a wine rack that likely is original.

On the second floor, the front room retains an original carved marble mantel (see photograph 7). The window and center door openings in this room retain original internal wooden shutters (in full working order) and casements. In this room, side windows retain original panels under their sills. Few other original elements remain on the second floor, which also reflects a reconfigured plan. A second marble mantel remains in a room on the third floor.

Addition

On the north side of the building is a two-story, flat-roofed concrete block building built in 1946 that was once connected by a doorway to the Wetzell House (see photograph 8). Currently, there are no internal connections between the house and this building. The addition has irregular fenestration on its east wall, with six steel sash windows in first floor openings and three on the second floor. The north elevation is symmetrical with small windows on the first and second floors flanking a center bay with a garage door opening at the first floor (high above the alley) under an opening containing wooden double doors.

Integrity

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

The Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House displays most of the historic architectural features that embody both the Second Empire style and the form of houses in the Midtown neighborhood built between 1870 and 1890. However, there have been alterations to the house. Most notable is the construction of the adjoining building to the north, once connected to the house. That building completely obscures the north elevation of the house. Another major alteration is the removal of all original windows and some of the original sills. Further changes include the cladding or replacement of the original cornice and resulting loss of detail as well as the removal of the balcony on the front elevation. The slate shingles of the roof have been replaced with asphalt shingles of a different size and shape. Inside, the floor plan has been altered and much of the original millwork is gone. However, the house retains its recognizable Second Empire form, its fenestration, its ornate entrance and the basic appearance of its cornice. The Wetzell House displays the historic character of a Second Empire house of the late nineteenth century. The house demonstrates integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, association and workmanship.

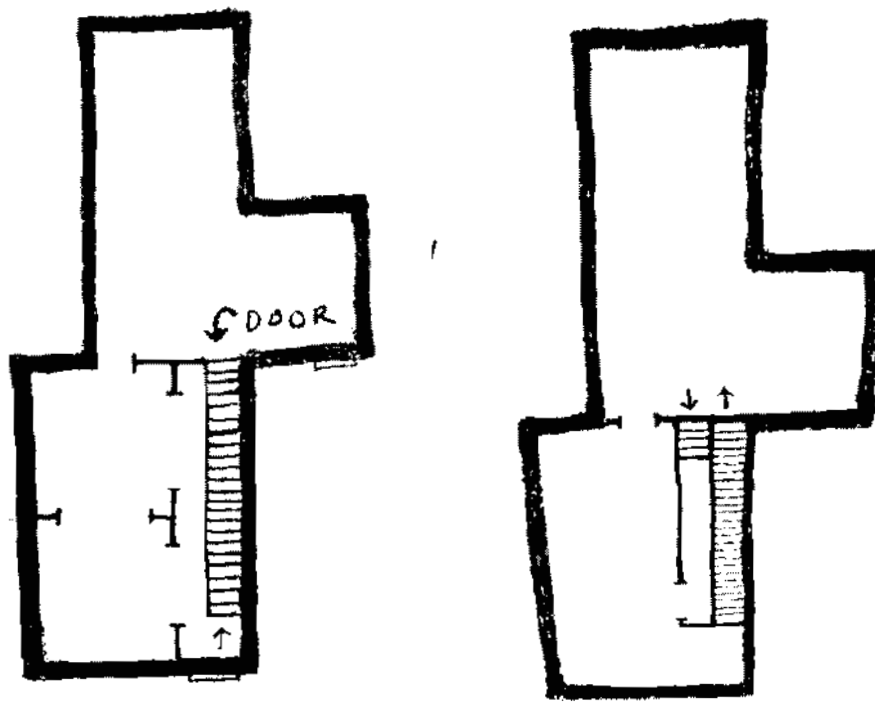
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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

Figure 1: First and second story floor plans, showing only those features original to the home (the back ends of both floors were significantly altered circa 1986 and now consist of a jumble of offices and closets).



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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

Summary

The Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House stands at 3741 Washington Avenue in the Midtown neighborhood of Saint Louis, Missouri. It is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. Wealthy druggist and wholesale dealer Zebediah F. Wetzell built the brick, mansard-roofed home for himself and his wife Mary in 1880. The building embodies the residential architecture of the era between 1870 and 1890 when the neighborhood, characterized by Second Empire homes, reigned supreme as the city's most fashionable upper-middle class residential district. Though its architect is unknown, the residence is an excellent example of the Second Empire style and exceedingly rare in a neighborhood now defined by large-scale commercial and institutional construction as well as large surface parking lots. Its particular treatment of the style reflects Midtown trends such as its steep four-sided mansard roof and its rare brick, rather than stone, main elevation, distinguishing the Wetzell House from other Second Empire examples in Saint Louis. The period of significance is 1880, the year of the home's construction.

Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell

Zebediah F. Wetzell was born in Washington, D. C. in 1821.¹ He and his brothers migrated west as young men and by 1845 he had settled in Saint Louis working as a clerk.² Within five years he established the Z. F. Wetzell & Co. drug and medical supply store on the city's riverfront, making a fortune importing and dealing medicines, surgical instruments, and chemicals (see Figure 2).³ Wetzell married and he and his wife Mary, born in Kentucky in 1826, lived downtown until resettling to the west near the intersection of Grand Avenue and Olive Street in 1870.⁴

The area surrounding this intersection, now known as Midtown, was then considered relatively far from the commercial and industrial hustle of the city. It offered something akin to a suburban lifestyle for those who could afford it, and by this time a number of wealthy merchants and professionals had built homes there. The Wetzells purchased one of these homes from iron merchant James B. Dean in October 1870. The residence stood on the north side of McClure, now Washington, Avenue mid-way between Grand and Vandeventer Avenue. The couple widened their grounds by twenty feet by purchasing the empty lot to the home's east one month later.⁵

¹ United States Census, 1880.

² City directory.; United States Census, 1850, 1870, 1880.; Zeb F. Wetzell, will.

³ *Taylor's Business Directory*.; "Men of Means: Solid Columns of Real and Personal Richness," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 14 August 1875.

⁴ City directory.

⁵ Recorder of Deeds office.; United States Census, 1870.; City directory.

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
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Midtown and the Second Empire Style

Over the next ten years the neighborhood's population boomed. As Saint Louis' industrial base rapidly expanded, its upper-middle class fled west to escape the accompanying noise and pollution. The extension of streetcar lines from downtown and Grand's growing importance as a north-south thoroughfare ensured that Midtown would attract a great deal of these intra-city migrants.⁶ Its reputation as a fashionable district peaked in the mid-1880s, by which time its streets had filled with single family homes and townhouses most often done in the Second Empire style.

The Second Empire style derived from sixteenth and seventeenth century French architecture. Its defining element, the mansard roof, was adopted by and thereafter named for architect Francois Mansart and achieved international popularity when revived and elaborated upon in Visconti and Lefuel's extension to the Palace of the Louvre. Commissioned by Emperor Napoleon III in 1852 and completed in 1857, the "New Louvre" had an enormous impact upon international visitors to the 1855 and 1867 Paris expositions. Western Europeans were quick to embrace its style, named "Second Empire" for Napoleon III's reign, but though examples of the style appeared in the United States in the 1850s it hit its stride here after the close of the Civil War. Though Americans likely modeled their designs more on diffused British examples rather than the Louvre itself, the mansard roof stamped itself upon most major cities as the nation's middle and upper classes recovered economically from the war.⁷ The style bore "connotations of prestige, affluence, and authority" and, being devoid of classical, gothic, or Romanesque elements, was considered incredibly modern.⁸ It adapted easily to a variety of architectural forms from row houses to major public buildings, and the prevalence of the latter in the United States during the 1870s earned it the nickname "General Grant Style."

The Second Empire fervor was no stranger to Saint Louis. The style dominated the early mansions of Benton Place (Lafayette Square Historic District, NR 7/24/86) and Vandeventer Place, as well as two of the city's most impressive public buildings from this era, the Four Courts Building (1869-1870) and the United States Post Office and Custom House (NHL, 2/28/71, 1873-1884). Though the Italianate style was still popular amongst the city's wealthy into the 1870s, the Second Empire style was the favorite through the 1880s.⁹ The upper-middle class Midtown, Mill Creek Valley, and Lafayette Square neighborhoods all blossomed during this era and, as a result, were home to the best examples of the style. Though its most notable element, the mansard roof, was used liberally during this time in the vernacular designs of middle and working class residences on the city's north and south sides, Second Empire's strictest interpretations were found in the three aforementioned enclaves.

⁶ Jean Fahey Eberle, *Midtown: A Grand Place to Be!*, pp. 12, 14.

⁷ Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture, 1607-1976*, p. 211.; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1870: Guide to the Styles*, p.103, 108.

⁸ Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture, 1607-1976*, p.211.

⁹ Richard J. Compton and Camille N. Dry, *Pictorial St. Louis, the Great Metropolis of the Mississippi Valley: A Topographical Survey Drawn in Perspective, A.D. 1875*, pl. 85, 88. FIND PROPER PLS.

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
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Three families had built Second Empire homes on the Wetzells' block by 1875 and six more came to their side of the street by 1880 (see Figure 3).¹⁰ As the simple country homes around them fell in favor of stylish modern residences, the Wetzells decided to rebuild. They razed their home and constructed a three-story, ten-room brick Second Empire residence with a complete mansard roof (the Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House, from here referred to as the Wetzell House) in its place and built a two-story brick stable at the rear of their eastern lot (see Figure 4). Their decision not to clad the home's main elevation in limestone was unusual for the time; Second Empire homes in Saint Louis almost universally boasted stone fronts. The couple's address shifted from 3707 to 3685 Washington, and they would each live here until their deaths.¹¹

The city cut the north-south path of Cabanne, now Spring, Avenue midway between Grand and Vandeventer two years later. This placed the Wetzells two lots east of the new intersection and they quickly purchased the valuable lot on the northwest corner of Washington and Cabanne. This tripled the size of their grounds, and for a time the house stood at the center of a 160 foot swath of land along Washington.¹² The new road also necessitated the re-numbering of homes between Washington and Vandeventer, with those east of Cabanne running from 3600 to 3700 and those west of it running from 3800 and beyond. The Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House was assigned its present address of 3741 Washington.¹³

By 1885 every lot on the Wetzells' block had been purchased. The couple must have been gratified by their decision to rebuild by the growing prominence of their particular stretch of Washington. That February the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* singled it out for its opulent development, stating that

In view of an aggregate expenditure of \$250,000 in the construction of large, airy mansions to occupy the vacant space on Washington avenue, between Grand and Cabanne avenues, that locality promises to become the most elegant residence block in the city within the next year.¹⁴

As part of Midtown's "old guard" the Wetzells had adapted remarkably well to the forces that were rapidly transforming the area; their fashionable new home ensured their status as some of the finest citizens in the neighborhood. Zebediah Wetzell wasn't able to enjoy this prominence for long, dying in the health resort town of Eureka Springs, Arkansas that May.¹⁵ Mary inherited the home and the lot to its east and took control of the western corner lot in 1886.¹⁶ A devout member of the Delmar Avenue Baptist Church, she promptly donated the latter to the Reverend William Harris for the construction of his home.¹⁷ This, for a time, returned the home's lot to its

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. 85, 88.; Building permits.; Whipple Fire Insurance Map (DATE??).

¹¹ City directory., St. Louis Probate Court, record of Mary H. Wetzell.

¹² Recorder of Deeds Office.

¹³ *Gould's Blue Book of the City of St. Louis.*; City directory.

¹⁴ "West End Improvements," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 21 February 1885.

¹⁵ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 22 May 1885.

¹⁶ Zeb F. Wetzell, will.; "Real Estate Transfers," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 23 March 1886.

¹⁷ Swecosky Collection, Missouri Historical Society.; Mary Wetzell was a dedicated church member but liked to use her money to hold sway over the congregation: In 1884 she donated part of her land for a new church building at 620

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
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original size.

Mary Wetzell passed away at age seventy in 1897. She divided much of her \$200,000 fortune among her nieces and nephews while control of the property went to a pair of lawyers designated her executors.¹⁸ At this time a number of steps were taken to “modernize” the Wetzell House, including the installation of new hardwood floors throughout and of new mantels for the two parlors.¹⁹ After a failed attempt at auctioning the house and land to lumber merchant Patrick B. Little (who had once lived in a similar home next door at 3733 Washington) in May 1900, the lawyers divided the property into three parcels and put them up for auction again the following year. The Wetzells’ neighbor to the east, attorney Frederick Newton Judson, purchased the eastern parcel with the stable.²⁰ Their neighbor to the west, City Comptroller Benjamin Taussig, purchased the western parcel, pushing his property line further east.²¹ The central parcel with the Wetzell House went to florist Henry C. Ostertag.²²

Midtown’s Decline as Residential Neighborhood

By this time Midtown’s residential district was showing signs of wear. The city’s rapidly expanding commercial core was engulfing the neighborhood, and by the turn of the century it was no longer on the western edge of the city but at its center. Streetcar companies took advantage of this, running more lines north-south along Grand and east-west along Olive. This made Midtown, whether its residents liked it or not, the transportation nexus of the city. Commercial development along these thoroughfares was growing, and the signs that Midtown was on the verge of a major transition were clear. Wealthy Saint Louisans had never much cared for living in close quarters with commerce and industry and by the 1890s were moving en masse to the city’s West End. Midtown as an upper-middle class neighborhood was becoming obsolete for the very reasons it had once been so attractive.

Coupled with this desire to escape the effects of urban growth were the changing tastes of the time.²³ The Second Empire style was most prevalent amongst residential construction during the 1870s and 1880s whereas the 1890s saw the widespread popularization of architectural Revival styles from the East. In 1887 the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* published an article entitled

Cabanne to keep it within walking distance of her home. Eight years later when fellow church members opted, against her wishes, to move to the corner of Delmar and Pendleton Avenues, she fought a failed legal battle to keep them nearby. The congregation’s selection of a pastor not to her liking soon thereafter was the final straw; she cut the church out of her will entirely, an action which earned her notoriety and even a small article in *The New York Times*. Her relationship with other congregations seems to have been somewhat better as the First Baptist Church of Kirkwood renamed itself in her honor in 1898.

¹⁸ “Rich Mrs. Wetzell Left Nothing to the Church,” *Necrology Scrapbook* Vol. IIc.

¹⁹ Letter from Thomas K. Skinker to Isabel R. Skinker, 8 September 1901.

²⁰ Judson sold the property to the Pendennis Apartment Company for the construction of the Pendennis Club Apartments on October 31, 1901. Its new owners razed the Wetzell stable in early November to make way for the new building’s rear courtyard.

²¹ Reverend William Harris had sold his home to Taussig in 1888.

²² St. Louis Probate Court, record of Mary H. Wetzell.; United States Census, 1900.

²³ Jean Fahey Eberle, *Midtown: A Grand Place to Be!*, pp. 17.

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**Wetzell, Zebediah F. and Mary H., House
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"Artistic Building: Some of the New Styles in the St. Louis West End" with sixteen illustrations demonstrating the infinite possibilities these new styles offered.²⁴ At the time such variation was revelatory and the wealthy's devotion to the Second Empire style quickly died. As could be expected, Midtown's aesthetic appeal faded in comparison with smart West End streets lined with a glittering assortment of new styles.

These elements which brought the neighborhood's tenure as an upper-middle class enclave to a close had a major impact on the Wetzell House. Owner Henry C. Ostertag never lived in the home but offered it for rent almost immediately.²⁵ By September 1901 wealthy lawyer Thomas Skinker was considering the house, among others, in his search for a home for his family. In a letter to his wife he weighed its pros and cons, citing the Wetzell executors' improvements among those reasons for leasing the home. Skinker then expressed the telltale misgivings about whether or not his wife would approve, saying "I feared you would think it too far east" and naming the home's "old fashioned" elements as deterrents.²⁶ At barely twenty years old the Wetzell House was considered dreadfully outmoded by the fashionable elite and the Skinkers eventually declined to live there. A series of more solidly middle-class families rented the house through the early 1920s during which time Ostertag presumably maintained ownership of the building.²⁷ It is unclear who took control of the property after his death in 1923, but by this time the home, like most others on its block, had been converted into a boarding house.²⁸

By this time the neighborhood had become thoroughly commercialized with theatres, car dealerships, and large office buildings lining its major streets. During the 1940s this commercialization began spilling over into residential areas as businesses converted homes into offices. Albert A. Franklin purchased the Wetzell House in 1946 and moved his carpet and rug business there from the Central West End. He constructed the two story addition to the building's north elevation to use as storage space.²⁹ Nash & Kinsella Laboratories bought the building to house its headquarters in the middle 1950s. William and Barbara Budde purchased it by 1965 and lived in the home's upper floors while renting the rest of the house to the Red Stripe Company. They sold the property to Bernard J. Brandon in 1971, and he combined the Wetzell House parcel with the former Wetzell properties to its west and east.³⁰ In 1986 Brandon sold the entire property to the Redemptorist Fathers to house their pre-novitiates attending nearby Saint Louis University. The order moved its students to St. John's University in Queens, New York in

²⁴ "Artistic Building: Some of the New Styles in the St. Louis West End," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 30 October 1887.

²⁵ City directory.; *Gould's Blue Book of the City of St. Louis.*; United States Census, 1910, 1920.

²⁶ Letter from Thomas K. Skinker to Isabel R. Skinker, 8 September 1901.

²⁷ City directory.

²⁸ "Henry Ostertag Dies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 13 December 1923.; United States Census, 1930.; City Directory.; *Gould's Red-Blue Book of the City of St. Louis.*

²⁹ City directory.; Building permits.

³⁰ Building permits.; Occupational Therapy Workshop, Inc. had purchased the Harris-Taussig home in 1949 and razed it the following year in order to build the one-story building which stands on the corner of Washington and Spring today (see Figure 5). Brandon combined it with the Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House and the Pendennis Club Apartment Building; the address of the complex was 3737-3747 Washington Avenue.

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2007 and is currently looking to sell the three properties.

The Wetzell House's survival is rather incredible in a neighborhood whose residential architecture was virtually decimated over the course of the 20th century. Commercial development replaced large sections of homes from the 1910s through the 1940s, and when the city suffered mass suburban out-migrations in the 1960s and 1970s an even greater number fell to vast surface parking lots. Today the once-dense Midtown boasts less than two dozen scattered single family residences. Of these, the Wetzell House is one of the best preserved, while several of the less fortunate are currently under threat of demolition. It is also one of only two Second Empire residences that remain, the other being a town house east of Grand Avenue at 3435 Washington (Midtown Historic District, NR 7/7/78). Both of these provide the only tangible link to the late nineteenth century when Second Empire residences defined the neighborhood. They are rare examples of the style outside of the still-intact Lafayette Square, for apart from Midtown's losses, the Mill Creek Valley was entirely razed in the early 1960s as the subject of a massive, 464-acre urban renewal project.

Apart from its importance as one of the few residences left in Midtown from this era, the home is unique amongst other Second Empire town homes in Saint Louis for its brick main elevation and complete mansard roof. Virtually all other residences in this style elsewhere in the city have stone fronts; even the Wetzell House's Midtown counterpart boasts a main elevation completely clad in stone. The style's finest examples in Lafayette Square (Lafayette Square Historic District, NR 7/24/86) are clad in stone as well, and most of these are without the Wetzell House's four-sided mansard roof. Since town home lots in Lafayette Square were generally narrower than those in Midtown, for the most part only corner buildings with multiple exposed elevations had multi-sided roofs. Lots in Midtown, especially west of Grand, were generally wider, exposing greater portions of buildings to the street and necessitating more complete mansards. Standing as it did on oversized grounds, the Wetzell House was particularly visible, making its four-sided roof a must by the standards of the time. As for its brick front, a look at 1909 fire insurance maps shows other brick-faced residences with four-side mansard roofs on the blocks to the north and south of Washington, meaning that Second Empire residences in Midtown were distinguishable from those elsewhere in the city not only for their more complete roofs but for their more common use of brick. As the only residence left in the neighborhood with both of these elements, the Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House is a crucial piece of Midtown's early history and stands out in an area which little resembles the fashionable residential community it once was.

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Figure 2: Advertisement for Z. F. Wetzell & Company from the *Taylor's Business Directory*.

Z. F. WETZELL & CO.,
IMPORTERS AND WHOLESALE DEALERS IN
DRUGS, MEDICINES, CHEMICALS,
Paints, Oils, Dye Stuffs,
Brushes, Instruments, Spices, Varnishes, Matches, Blacking.
— ALSO —
Window Glass and Apothecaries' Ware,
AT FACTORY PRICES,
NO 43, NORTH MAIN STREET,
SAINT LOUIS, MO.

— Selling only for Cash or approved paper. —
Z. F. W. & Co., havng no losses by bad debts to make up off of those cus-
tomers who do pay, therefore can and will sell very low.

ALL GOODS WARRANTED.

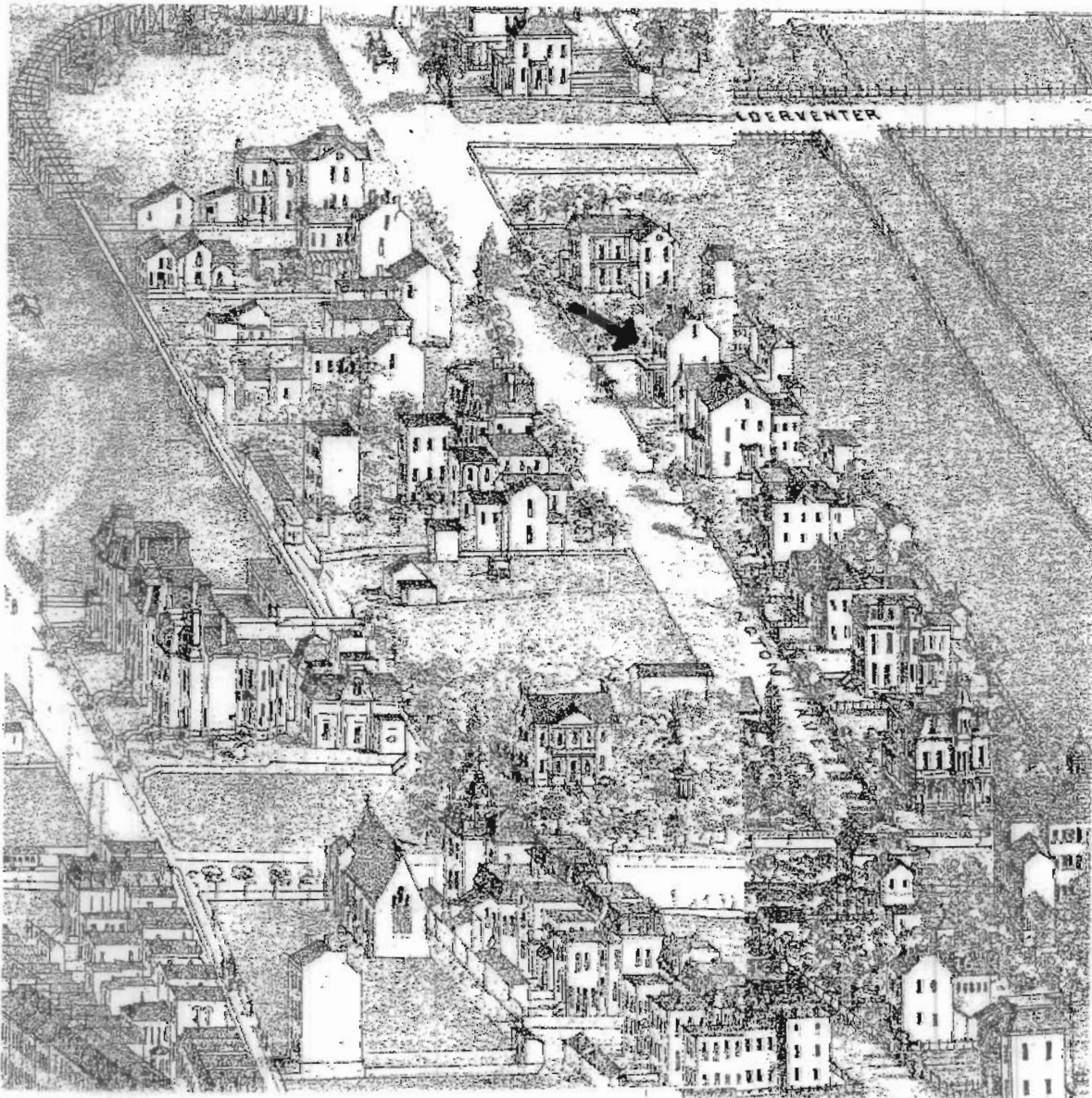
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Figure 3: Block between Grand and Vandeventer in 1875. The Dean-Wetzell house is indicated by the black arrow. Note: The perspective in this particular plate is skewed, making the homes between Grand and Vandeventer Avenues appear closer together than they actually were. (*Pictorial St. Louis, the Great Metropolis of the Mississippi Valley: A Topographical Survey Drawn in Perspective, A.D. 1875*).



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Figure 4: Original configuration of the Wetzell House and its stable to the east (St. Louis Probate Court, record of Mary H. Wetzell).



Figure 5: View looking northeast from the intersection of Washington and Spring Avenues. The Occupational Therapy Building stands on the corner with the Wetzell House directly to its east. The two-story, circa 1985 chapel attached to its rear elevation abuts the 1946 Wetzell House addition but there is no internal connection between the two. The remains of the former Delmar Avenue Baptist Church are visible to the left.



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St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 22 May 1885.

St. Louis Probate Court. Record of Mary H. Wetzell.

St. Louis Probate Court. Will of Zebediah F. Wetzell.

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St. Louis [Independent City], MO**

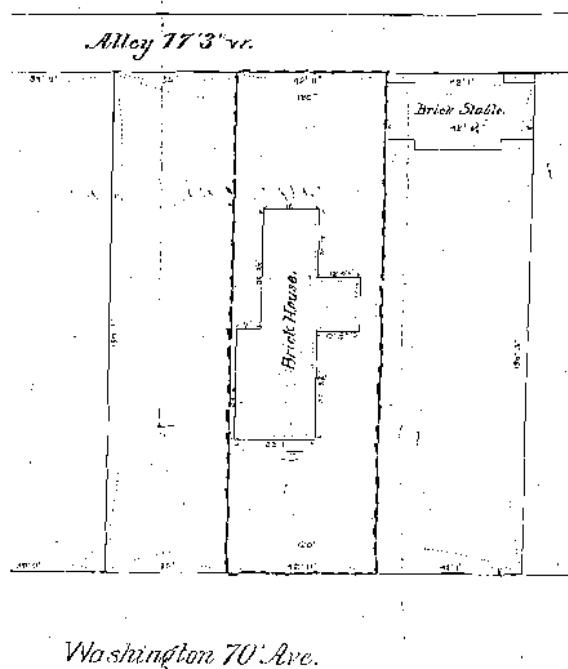
Boundary Description

The Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House is located at 3741 Washington Avenue in the Midtown neighborhood of Saint Louis, Missouri. The building stands on City Block 2288S and is part of Lots 6 and 7 of the Vasquez Arpent Addition. The nominated property measures 150 feet and 3 inches by 42 feet and 11 inches. It is legally identified by the Assessor's Office as part of parcel 22880603250 in which it is joined with the properties at 3747 and 3737 Washington Avenue. The nominated parcel is indicated by a dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House Boundary Map."

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel date to the 1901 auction of the house when it was severed from the eastern and western portions of its lot. Since this time the home's lot size has not changed, and the construction of buildings to its either side makes a return to the pre-1901 state of its grounds highly unlikely.

Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House (St. Louis Probate Court, Record of Mary H. Wetzell)



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Unless otherwise indicated, the following is true for all photographs submitted with this nomination:

Zebediah F. and Mary H. Wetzell House
3741 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri
Photographer: Lindsey Derrington
January 2008
Negative on file at: Landmarks Association of St. Louis

The descriptions of each photograph number are:

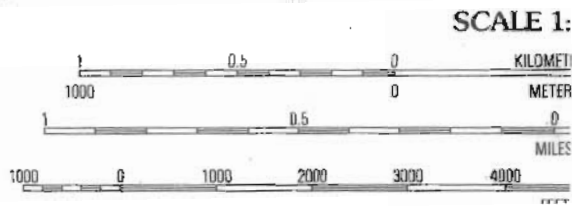
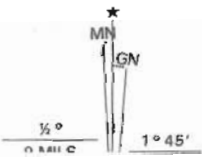
1. Looking northwest at main elevation from Washington Avenue.
2. Looking northwest at main entrance from Washington Avenue.
3. Looking northwest at cornice, brackets, and mansard roof from Washington Avenue.
4. Looking southeast at west elevation.
5. Interior detail of main staircase with newell post.
6. Interior view of front parlor looking south.
7. Interior view of carved marble mantel on the second floor.
8. Looking southwest at 1946 addition from alley.

bedial Ford Blay H.
 Schulz House
 1711 Wash of ...
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active 740 700
 outing 4280 540



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1998; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1954. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and



SCALE 1:



ST. JOHN













