

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

4-14-06

**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 any 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 **Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership**

other names/site number

**2. Location**

street & number **431 S. Fourth Street**

\_\_\_\_ Not for publication

city or town **Springfield**

\_\_\_\_ vicinity

state **Illinois**

code **IL**

county **Sangamon**

code **167**

zip code **62701**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

*Wien. L. Wheeler / SHPO*  
Signature of certifying official

*4-11-06*  
Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**

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 commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership

Sangamon Co., IL

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

**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	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	buildings
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register      N/A

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

**Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership**  
Name of Property

**Sangamon Co., IL**  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  
**COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  
**WORK IN PROGRESS**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
**LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete, Brick**

Roof **Synthetic: membrane**

Walls **Brick**

other **Terra Cotta**

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

**Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership**

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**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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**COMMERCE**

Period of Significance      **1919 - 1950**

Significant Dates      **N/A**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)      **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation      **N/A**

Architect/Builder      **Reiger, Harry**

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

**Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership**  
Name of Property

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

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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 **Lincoln Library; Abraham Presidential Library in Springfield, IL**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property **Less than 1 acre**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	273028	4408632	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership**  
Name of Property

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County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title **Tom Gihl, Senior Vice President**

organization **Illinois National Bank**

date **October 2005**

street & number **322 E. Capitol**

telephone **217/747-5511**

city or town **Springfield** state **IL**

zip code **62701**

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Illinois National Bank**

street & number **322 E. Capitol**

telephone

city or town **Springfield** state **IL**

zip code **62701**

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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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Narrative Description**

The Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership building at 431 South Fourth Street in Springfield is sited on the corner of Fourth and Jackson streets and designed with the elevations on each street acting as facades. The overall appearance is similar to factory buildings constructed between the years 1915 and 1930. The main elevations are brick walls divided into grids by decorative white-glazed terra-cotta piers and banding. Approximately one half of the wall space was filled with windows, indicating an attempt to bring as much natural light as possible to interior spaces, a design feature common during that era. The original windows had severely deteriorated and are currently being replaced with windows that have been approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

The east (Fourth Street) façade is divided into three symmetrical bays. A narrow central bay consists of a first floor pedestrian entrance flanked by the wider automobile show windows on either side. These display windows were originally filled by large sheets of glass in the bottom two-thirds of the space with triple rectangular transom lights above, but these were replaced with modern, energy efficient frames and solid composition materials. The current owners are in the process of replacing the modern windows with ones that match the originals. A single window opening is centered above the pedestrian entrance in the central bay. All window sills on the second and third levels of the east and south facades are terra-cotta. The entire composition is defined by bold white-glazed, decorative terra-cotta piers that extend upward past the parapet wall which is capped with the same white terra-cotta. Similarly, a vertical band of terra-cotta appears at the cornice line above the third floor window openings and a matching one above the

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first floor showroom window openings. The overall effect of this brilliant white glazed surface, paired with the flat red brick infill above the first floor, is one of strong contrast emphasizing the geometry of the design. The pedestrian entrance was originally covered by a metal semi-circular permanent canopy similar to ones on the Saint Nicholas Hotel at Fourth and Jefferson streets and the old Sangamo Club Building on the southeast corner of Fifth and Capitol streets. This canopy was removed by 1950.

The south façade is clearly designed to reflect the division between showroom/public functions of the building and the service/employee section of the structure. At the east end of this elevation terra-cotta piers break the building into bays matching the larger two on the east elevation. These bays replicate the fenestration pattern at all three levels and continue with the vertical banding from the front. They clearly demarcate the part of the building serving showroom/reception functions. Moving west, a large central bay has window openings arranged symmetrically on both the second and third levels. They are decorated above and below by terra-cotta horizontal bands. At the first level in this central bay are six window openings and a large overhead door placed in regular but not perfectly symmetrical fashion. A pedestrian entrance door (non-original) is located between a pair of windows on the east end of this central bay.

West of this central bay is a pair of bays reflecting those on the east end of this elevation. The one on the right (east) matches the two at the opposite end in composition except that, in place of a showroom window, a second large overhead door opens, designed originally to allow access to the service and garage areas. The left (west) of these paired bays offers contrasting balance to the other parts of the building. It is one story taller, making a conscious break with the rhythm of the

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rest of the façade. The window openings at the second and third levels make an abrupt break here where the infill panels are of solid brick rather than centered with openings. This tower bay contains the automobile elevator once used to deliver cars to the storage and paint shop areas on the upper floors.

The rear (west) elevation is built of plain brick divided into two bays. The bay on the right (south), the backside of the elevator tower, has a window opening right of center at both the second and fourth floors. An original overhead door opening (probably a receiving door) has been bricked in at the first level below these openings. To its left is a 6-light window. The original painted "Ford Sales Co." sign is still visible along the top wall of this bay. The bay to the left (north) has an asymmetrical arrangement of doors and windows. Three window openings (now covered) appear at each level. On the first floor are two double window openings at center and left with a single window opening at the right. On the second and third floors paired window openings are located in the center with a single window on the right, above the first-floor single window. On the left at the second and third levels are flush, steel fire doors and iron fire escape stairs and balustrade. A large metal gutter and downspouts empty into oversize pipes on this bay as well.

The north elevation is considered a secondary façade and contains common brick without any terra-cotta ornamentation. It has an adjoining two story structure that leaves only the third floor visible on the east end but steps down to show both the third and second floors on the west end. There are 10 windows with five aligned on each of the third and second floors on the west end of the north façade. There are no windows on the north façade from the middle to the east end.

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The primary interior space within the Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership is the Show Room that was located on the East 1/3 portion of the First Level. The show room is almost original in appearance. All the 8 foot tall limed oak wood paneling is in place as per the original 1920s contract documents. The plaster walls above the wood paneling and decorative cast plaster ornamentation still remain as well. The decorative plaster beamed ceiling also matches the original 1920s contract documents. The plaster and plaster ornamentation have been repainted over the years to match the original. There is one column located in the center of space that matches the wall configuration with limed oak wood paneling and plaster. The top of the column flares out to a square cap that is consistent with all the other columns within the building.

A granite tread and riser staircase leads up to the second level and the west end of the show room. Wood railing and plaster walls and ceilings surround the staircase. A limed oak wood paneled Vestibule remains as per the original 1920s contract documents. Leaded clear glass panels are adjacent to the single wood door leading into the vestibule. Leaded glass walls are on both the north and south sides of the vestibule. The vestibule is capped at about 12 feet and the original prism glass transom above the vestibule was removed when the aluminum storefront entry was installed.

The other secondary interior space was open and used for automobile storage and maintenance. As indicated in the 1920s Contract Documents the only real finished space was the Show Room located on the first level at the East 1/3 of the building. The remaining 2/3 of the first level consisted of repair bays and storage for automobiles. A freight elevator and stair was located at

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the Southwest corner of building and accesses levels one through three. The basement is a partial basement that is only accessed by stairs. There is just one row of concrete columns running down the length of the center of building. The building footprint is 60 ft. wide x 200 ft. long or 12,000 square feet per floor. The second level was used as a parts room and workshop; the third level was a paint shop.

The Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The changes to the exterior of this structure have been minimal and it remains remarkably original considering its changing uses over 80 years of existence. Much of this original quality can be attributed to the low-maintenance exterior of the original design.

The original windows were severely rusted due to lack of maintenance over the life of the building. The severe rusting of the steel window frames is contributing to the spalling of the terra-cotta sills on the exterior and the concrete sills on the interior. Settlement has also caused buckling of the frames. Putty on the glazing was missing and over the years has led to exfoliation of the window system. The steel lintels were delaminating and had to be replaced, making removal of the windows imperative.

The first floor display windows were originally copper clad wood framed filled by large sheets of glass in the bottom two-thirds of the space with triple rectangular prism glass transom lights above. In the 1960s the wood frames and prism glass were removed and replaced with a brushed aluminum framed storefront window system with red porcelain enamel window panels. There is nothing that remains of the original storefront window system.

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The replacement for the casement windows will be an aluminum window system that will match the size and profile of the original steel windows as closely as possible while maintaining window warranty and performance requirements. The new windows will have muntins with true divided lights to match all of the existing windows on all sides of the building, not just the primary facades. The muntins will be flat narrow 1-inch wide profile to match the original. The existing terra-cotta sills will remain in place on the south and east elevations.

The replacement storefront display windows on the first level on East and partial Southeast Elevations will bring back the original design intent of the 1920s era building facades and replace the out-of-place 1960s storefront system. In lieu of copper covered wood framing, thermal break aluminum frames matching the profiles of the original configuration will be used. The framing system will be kynar painted the finish color to match the aged copper and the other green windows. The large lower portion glass units will be two sheets of 3/8-inch glass with 1/2-inch air space for thermal resistance. The upper portion of the display windows will replicate the prism glass configuration of the original building. In order to maintain thermal resistance, the prism glass will be sandwiched between two sheets of clear glass. The overall appearance will retain the 4-inch x 4-inch prism glass pattern and there will be three units positioned over the large display windows. All of the replacement windows have been reviewed and approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

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**Statement of Significance**

Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for commerce for its use as an automobile dealership in Springfield. The dealership is locally significant in Springfield's history as it relates to the early and overwhelming acceptance of the automobile in the city. Its period of significance is from 1919, the year it was built, until 1955, the fifty-year cutoff for significance for the National Register. Few remaining structures built specifically as automobile dealerships on Springfield's original "automobile row" remain today. They illuminate the history of the social, physical and cultural changes brought about in Springfield by the automobile in the first half of the twentieth century. Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership was designed by leading Springfield architect Harry Reiger and built for prominent Ford dealer Frank Jennings in 1919. Twenty years earlier the automobile was only a novelty in Springfield and the United States. At the time Jennings built his dealership on Fourth Street, its location was one of the most desirable commercial areas of the city, adjacent to what was once Springfield's most fashionable neighborhood, Aristocracy Hill, centered around the Illinois Executive Mansion.

**Aristocracy Hill:**

Beginning with construction of the Governor's Mansion in 1855, the city's wealthy and elite began building grand mansions close by where a wooded, slightly elevated topography was formed by the Old Town Branch, an open stream which meandered through the area. Once a feature of the Executive Mansion's front lawn, the branch is now covered and forms a main trunk line of the city's storm sewers. Contemporary accounts described a few local mansions:

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Mr. Jacob Bunn's house is the first to arrest attention among the new improvements. It is a handsome, stately, square-rigged building, with brick walls, after no particular order and painted mouse color....Adjoining to the south, is the new castle cottage belonging to G. W. Chatterton. This is the most unique specimen of architecture in the city. The style, Gothic or Elizabethan, carried out with fanciful extension....The residence of Major Iles and the open ground west, is the chief ornament of "Aristocracy Hill."<sup>1</sup>

The structure generally acknowledged as Springfield's grandest mansion was built on Fourth Street directly east of the Executive Mansion. Former Governor Joel Matteson erected his palatial Italian Villa in 1856 with the intention of outshining the Governor's house, which he considered too plain. The house boasted a large glass-domed conservatory, a great barn, and a coach house. Extensive gardens and landscape surrounding the house included statuary and other embellishments. On an extremely cold winter's night when the thermometer registered 30 degrees below zero, the house was destroyed in a fire. But the house remained fixed in local lore and memory well into the 1940s and periodic news stories of the "remember when" variety recalled its grandeur.

By the 1900s the Aristocracy Hill area was unchallenged as the most expensive and socially correct residence district in the city. The wealthiest and most powerful local families lived here. Its convenient location adjoining downtown Springfield was the social, commercial, financial, and entertainment hub of the community and those who could afford the extravagant housing on the hill enjoyed convenience of living close to the central business district. Leading businesses and professional offices were located in the central business district. A 1902 newspaper story reported that the most expensive local real estate were the lots facing the public square around the Courthouse (today the Old State Capitol) building.

But, unlike today's residential areas, protected by zoning from incompatible uses, even the best 19th

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century neighborhoods were subject to mixed uses. For instance, a large woolen mill occupied the block directly north across the street from the Executive Mansion and the main passenger rail line ran along Third Street nearby. Inexpensive housing was tucked in along streets like Third, housing poor and lower class families, many with members who served in the large houses or clerked or labored downtown.

The development of a growing streetcar system after the Civil War allowed the community to expand in all directions, particularly to west and southwest. Newer and more expensive housing at the terminus of the car lines drained some of the residents from Aristocracy Hill, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time the downtown commercial areas expanded south of Capitol Avenue (originally Market Street), encroaching on the peacefulness of the Hill. But, it was the coming of the automobile that would finally destroy the fragile residential quality on the Hill by the mid 20th century, a process that took over 50 years to unfold.

**Automobiles in Springfield:**

The introduction and rise of the automobile's popularity in Springfield took place in the first half of the 20th century. As noted by Curtis Mann in the *Uptown Garage Application for Landmark Designation*, the first automobile arrived in Springfield in 1900 when Springfield merchant J. Francis Miller bought a Stanhope pattern car from a factory in Peoria and drove it to Springfield. The following year, Springfield's first automobile dealer, Guy Mathis, traveled to Detroit and returned with two one-cylinder Northern Runabouts. Mathis sold both of them. Only eight people out of 35,000 residents were owners of automobiles in 1901.<sup>2</sup> From this small, early fad grew an obsession with the private automobile in Springfield and the United States. Car ownership nationally grew tremendously between 1900 and 1910, rising from 8,000 to a half million. By 1920 there were 8 million cars registered and 23 million by the decade's end. One social history noted that according to the U.S. Census, there were more automobiles

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than bathtubs in America households.

By 1909, 150 automobiles were registered to owners in Springfield. Within a few years of Guy Mathis' first dealership there were numerous businesses catering to the car-repair garages, auto supply stores, tire retailers, storage garages, gasoline stations and auto dealerships. The first auto dealerships were located exclusively in the downtown area and, increasingly on South Fourth Street. This can be explained by a number of factors. Dealers like other businesses, sought locations with high traffic and downtown, as the heart of the city, filled that requirement. They also preferred to demonstrate their automobiles on paved streets, which allowed for greater passenger comfort and kept the cars cleaner than if driven on the unpaved streets in outlying areas. The majority of paved streets were located in the central city.

The 400 block of South Fourth Street offered comparatively more open space than other sections of downtown. This was because of the closing and partial demolition of the former woolen mill buildings on the northeast corner of Fourth and Jackson streets. Additionally, as some of the Aristocracy Hill mansions were demolished, their large lots accommodated new commercial structures. By 1915 six automobile dealers were located on South Fourth Street with three of them in the 400 block. They offered a dazzling array of automobile brands from which to choose -- Briscoe, Cadillac, Chalmers, Dodge, Essex, Maxwell, Lincoln, Packard, Paige, Stearns-Knight, Studebaker, Overland and others. In these early years there was confusion as to the direction of the auto industry and it was not yet clear that a few companies in Detroit would come to dominate the market. Similarly, many dealers stocked only a few automobiles each with most customers placing special orders. The few cars on hand could be accommodated in typical commercial buildings with only a few modifications. For example, the present Winch Floral building on the northwest corner of Fourth and Monroe streets housed a dealership in this era. Those in the 400 block of South Fourth occupied similar Main Street style commercial buildings

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that were also suitable for numerous retail uses.

It is clear that, while Springfield residents were eager to adopt the car as a primary form of transportation, this acceptance meant drastic changes in the pattern of cities, many of which were detrimental to residential neighborhoods like Aristocracy Hill. Academic and popular writing from the era was filled with critiques and optimism about this change. The noise and congestion automobiles brought to the smaller and not always paved streets, which were originally designed for horses and carriages, were routinely decried. This was doubly problematic in that most 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses were oriented to the street. Increasingly residential life would be oriented to the backyard; with the street side merely an anonymous entrance.

The auto dealers and service and part suppliers near Aristocracy Hill benefited from their location in an attractive part of the city while the neighborhood suffered as a result of increasing commercialization. But it was clear that nothing was going to hold back this social and economic change. Fourth Street, from Jefferson to Jackson became the city's first identifiable "auto dealer's row." By the early 1920s, six of the city's 15 auto dealerships were located there in the 200 through 400 blocks. Also related businesses of storage and service garages, automobile parts dealers, The Motor Inn and Uptown Garage became part of the mix.

Development of these corridors in American cities generally and in Springfield, specifically, is explained in part by transportation and urbanization scholar Keith Sculle. Speaking in relation to the Uptown Garage some blocks north of the buildings at 425-430 South Fourth, Sculle's description defines the fabric of this Fourth Street "automobile row."

Springfield -- state capital, county seat within a retail district, and mid-size city --

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promised a reasonably profitable source from parking and service demands in one building when real estate proximate to customers' needs became available. The constellation of a nearby railroad station, hotel corridor, and county seat downtown made the construction of the Uptown Garage a certain sign that Illinois' capitol had matured as a city in the automobile age.<sup>3</sup>

In 1919, the Bette Stuart Institute, a fashionable girls' school located in an old Aristocracy Hill mansion at Fourth and Jackson streets, was vacated. Frank Jennings, whose dealership was in a commercial building across the street, saw a chance for expansion. He purchased the old building, demolished it and hired a leading architect to design a completely modern facility at a cost of over \$200,000. This represented the full integration of various aspects of a dealership.

In the auto industry, dealerships became increasingly integrated, offering sales, service and repair all under one roof and often in a building designed specifically for that purpose. Jennings' building incorporated a sales floor, offices, service floor, hot-water washing facility, storage garage and even a repainting unit on the third floor. Contemporary newspaper reports stressed the modernity of the structure:

The building will have a total floor space of 45,000 feet and will be the first completely fire-proof garage built in Springfield. Large metal windows with enameled wall and ceilings will make the building a "daylight" structure of the most modern type, allowing the highest type of public service possible... the only wood used in the entire building will be a few doors and two office partitions. Brick walls, metal windows and reinforced concrete floors will make the structure both fire-proof and one of the most beautiful buildings in the city. The exterior will be faced with a dark red matt [sic] face bricked

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and trimmed with a delicate shade of cream colored ornamental terra-cotta, making the garage ornamental as well as substantial.<sup>4</sup>

“Speed is the motive,” said the newspaper, noting that the workshop “...will be equipped with all labor-saving machinery now on the market...to cut down the time on each job as much as possible.” This speed and modernity extended even to “an extra high-speed elevator which will cut off a few seconds time on each trip from floor to floor.” This stress on speed and efficiency resonated well with the modern automobile-obsessed public. Sleekness, speed and efficiency were the bywords for automobile technology and design. The Jennings Ford building was the epitome, the high point marking the full development of auto sales and one-point service achieved within the first generation following the introduction of cars to the general public.

While the building at 431 S. Fourth Street remained an automobile dealership for years, the Jennings Ford business did not last as long. Sometime between 1927 and 1933, the building was home to a new dealership, for city directories list the Glisson Motor Company at the address in 1933. Between 1940 and 1950 the building was occupied by Capitol City Motors, Inc., and in 1955, it was listed as the R. E. Broe dealership. In 1960, the building was the garage for Illinois Bell Telephone Company. Before the property was sold to its current owner, it served as the Illinois State Library Literacy office.

There are few buildings left in the downtown area that were originally automobile dealerships. Next door to the north of the Jennings Ford building, while not quite so elaborate, the two-story building at 425 South Fourth was also built as a showroom and service garage in the early 1920s for the Constant & Groves Chevrolet dealership. The first floor was devoted to the dealership while the second floor provided office space for financial companies and labor organizations. It was a simpler arrangement of dealership specialization but reflected the new showrooms with oversize plate glass windows filled with

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section  8  Page  14  **Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership, Sangamon County, IL**

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shiny new models. And, although it housed some other uses, it remained a dealership for a much longer time, well into the 1950s. The building at 425 South Fourth did not serve as a dealership between 1928 and 1943. It was then occupied by the United States Postal Service as the main post office during construction of the new Federal Building at Sixth and Monroe streets and later by the new Auto Inn, an auto service garage. Still later, the Main Motor Service, which stored automobiles and worked on their electric systems, occupied the building. Finally, it returned to use as a dealership in 1944 until the mid 1960s. For over 30 years the two buildings operated as automobile-related businesses. Virtually all of the new car dealerships remained in the downtown area in these years before their mass exodus to the far east side near Interstate I-55 beginning in the mid-1960s. Across the street from the Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership and Chevrolet dealership was Harold Prehn's Dodge dealership; some used car lots were located nearby.

Jennings is one of the last remaining buildings built as automobile dealership in the downtown area. In 1955 the city directory listed only four automobile dealerships, other than Jennings and Constant & Groves, in the downtown area. The downtown buildings occupied by Bates Chevrolet (413 S. Fourth Street), Giuffre Buick, and the dealership at 106-112 E. Jefferson Street have since been demolished. Buick's large garage/showroom on South Second Street was demolished for the construction of the Illinois State Library. Constant & Groves has been remodeled on the exterior; a non-historic permanent awning and incompatible windows were installed; the changes appear to have been made during the 1970s. In the 1955 city directory, Modern Motors was listed at 528 S. Fifth Street just south of Jennings. The building currently is used for office space and no longer resembles an automobile dealership.

The next generation of dealerships was represented, typically by a suburban, single-story building with large surface parking. A good Springfield example, still extant, built nearly a decade after Jennings'

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earlier, more urban design, is the George Kreider Cadillac/LaSalle dealership on the southwest corner of Fifth and Cook streets. Although suburban in appearance, this dealership was adjacent to downtown and in the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood, but represents a later development in dealership construction and design.

Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership is a part of the larger context with Constant & Groves Chevrolet, the Motor Inn, and Uptown Garage further north, that document the last vestiges of what was once Springfield's original "automobile row," a concentrated strip of businesses catering to the automobile in its first generation of development and acceptance by the American public. The location of these businesses here did much to degrade the quality of the surrounding, once fashionable neighborhood. The universal adoption of the private automobile simultaneously allowed residents to escape the increasing blight and move to the edges of the community. These buildings are an important counterpoint to the Illinois Executive Mansion and few remaining grand houses from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Together they document the important social and economic force of the automobile that changed the face of American cities.

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<sup>1</sup> "Aristocracy Hill," *Illinois State Journal*, May 13, 1854, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Mann, Curtis. Uptown Garage Landmarking Application, page 14.

<sup>3</sup> Mann, page 15.

<sup>4</sup> "Work to Start on new Fireproof Garage" *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield) March 14, 1920, part 2, p. 3.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
OMB No. 1024-0018  
(8-86)

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   9   Page  16  **Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership, Sangamon County, IL**

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**Bibliography**

“Aristocracy Hill,” *Illinois State Journal*, May 13, 1854.

Mann, Curtis. “Uptown Garage Landmarking Application.” City of Springfield, Illinois.

*Polk's Springfield (Sangamon County) City Directory. Springfield, IL: R. L. Polk, 1927, 1933, 1940, 1950, 1960.*

Sanborn Insurance Maps, City of Springfield, Volumes 1 and 2, updated 1954.

“Work to Start on new Fireproof Garage” *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield) March 14, 1920.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
OMB No. 1024-0018  
(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 15 **Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership, Sangamon County, IL**

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**Geographical Data**

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is located at 431 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, in Lots 8 and 9 and the south half of lots 7 and 10 in block 2 of Washington Iles' Addition in the City of Springfield, County of Sangamon, State of Illinois. The P.I.N.: 14-34-152-013

**Boundary Justification**

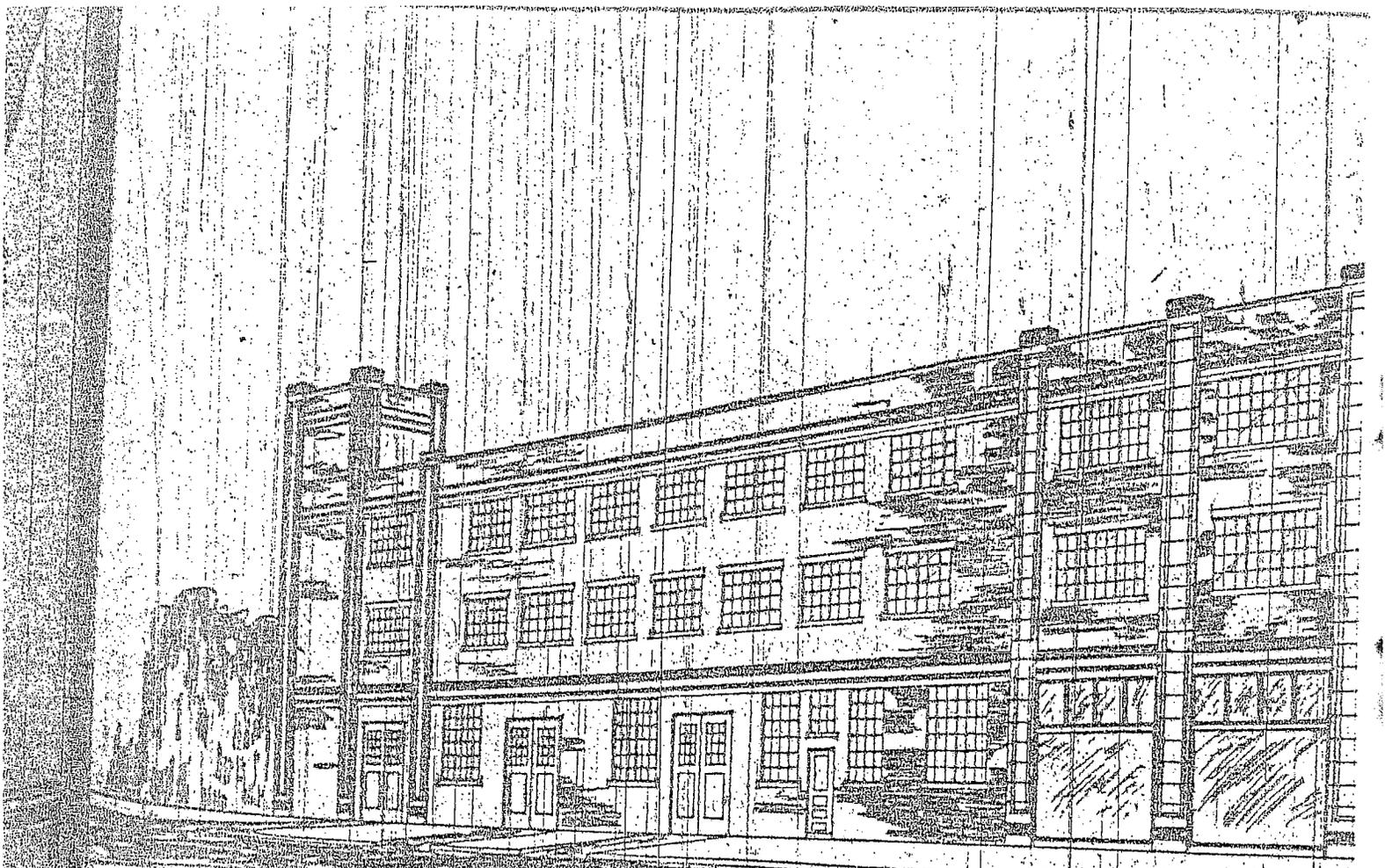
The boundary includes the property and the land historically associated with it.



EXHIBIT AND SHOWROOM  
MUNICH AUTO SALES COMPANY  
11-13 SOUTH FOURTH STREET  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS  
(CIRCA 1920)

HARRY J. REIGER, ARCHITECT  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS



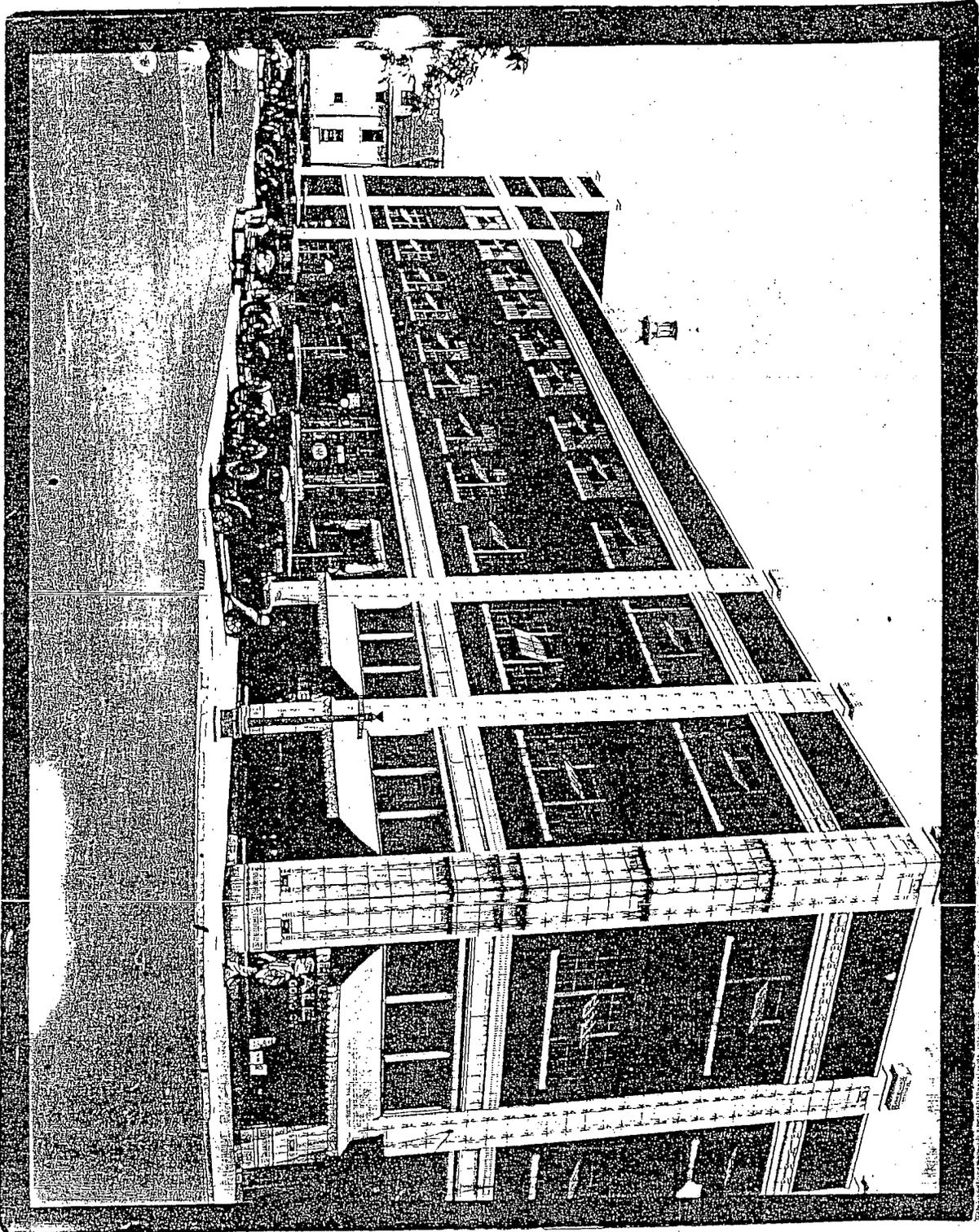


JENNINGS AUTO SALES CO.

Plans for the new service building to be erected for the Jennings Auto Sales company at Fourth and Jackson streets will be started, today. The building, formerly occupied by the Katie Stuart Institute, was completely razed, and a large amount of the material for the structure is already on the ground. The general contract for the work was recently awarded by Architect W. E. Reiger to John Sims & Son, of Springfield, and the heating and plumbing contract was awarded to Sturman-Barrick & Company. The cost of the building is estimated at more than \$200,000. The building will have a total floor space of 45,000 feet, and will be completely fire-proof. Room to store cars will be afforded by the two large metal windows with gridded walls and ceilings, making the building a "daylight" garage of the most modern type. The highest time of public

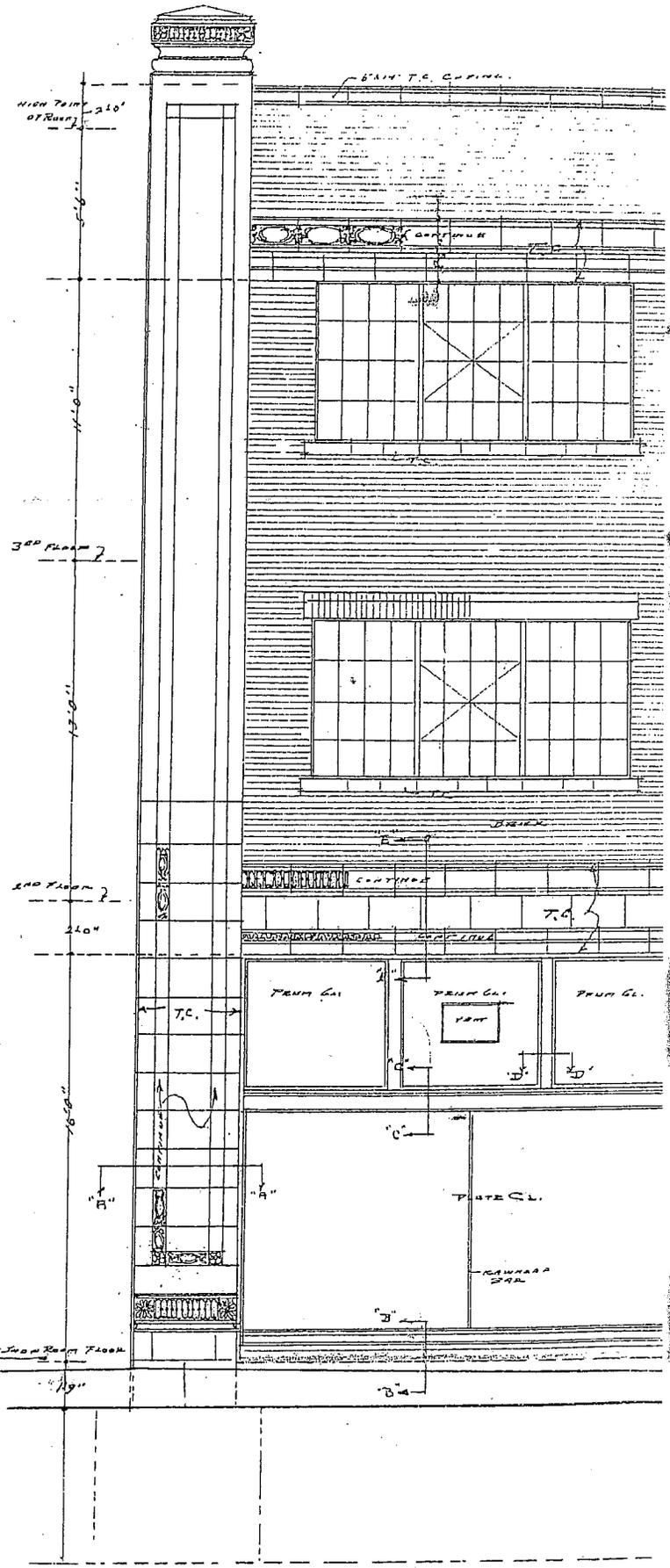
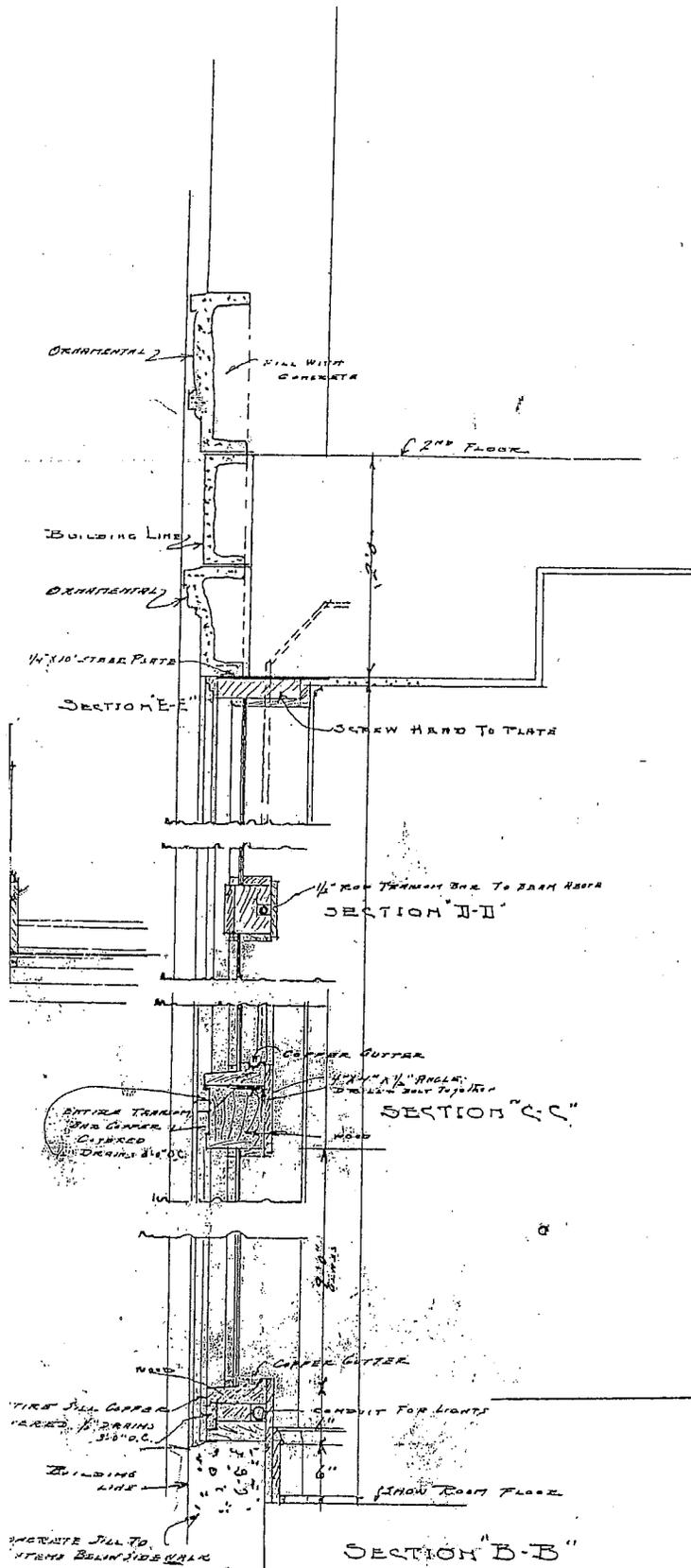
service possible. Hot water will be supplied to the wash racks, making it possible to wash cars during the cold weather without any possible damage to their finish. To Use Little Wood. The only wood used in the entire building will be a few doors and two office partitions. Brick walls, metal windows and reinforced concrete floors will make the structure both fire-proof and one of the most beautiful buildings in the city. The building will be sixty feet on Fourth street and 215 feet on Jackson street, with three stories and a basement. The exterior will be faced with a dark red matt face brick and trimmed with a delicate shade of cream colored ornamental terra cotta, making the garage ornamental as well as substantial. The front sixty feet of the first floor will be devoted to the show room and offices. The principal entrance will be from Fourth street, the outside door to be sheltered with a finely wrought iron canopy. The show room will be aban-

donately decorated, with paneling around the walls and a beautiful ornamental cornice. Two private offices, a general office will open into the show room. Provide For Public Comfort. Considerable attention was paid in the plans for the building to the comfort of the public. A rest room, very nicely furnished with wicker furniture and other accessories, is one of the features of this line. Directly back of the office is a receiving room for Ford and Packard tractors, with two entrances from Jackson street, one on the west end, so that a large number of cars will be impossible to wash. Wash racks will also be located in the rear of the first floor. The entrance to the service office is in the rear of the general office. The stock room, where a large number of cars will be required to build a car will occupy the front of the second floor. A marble

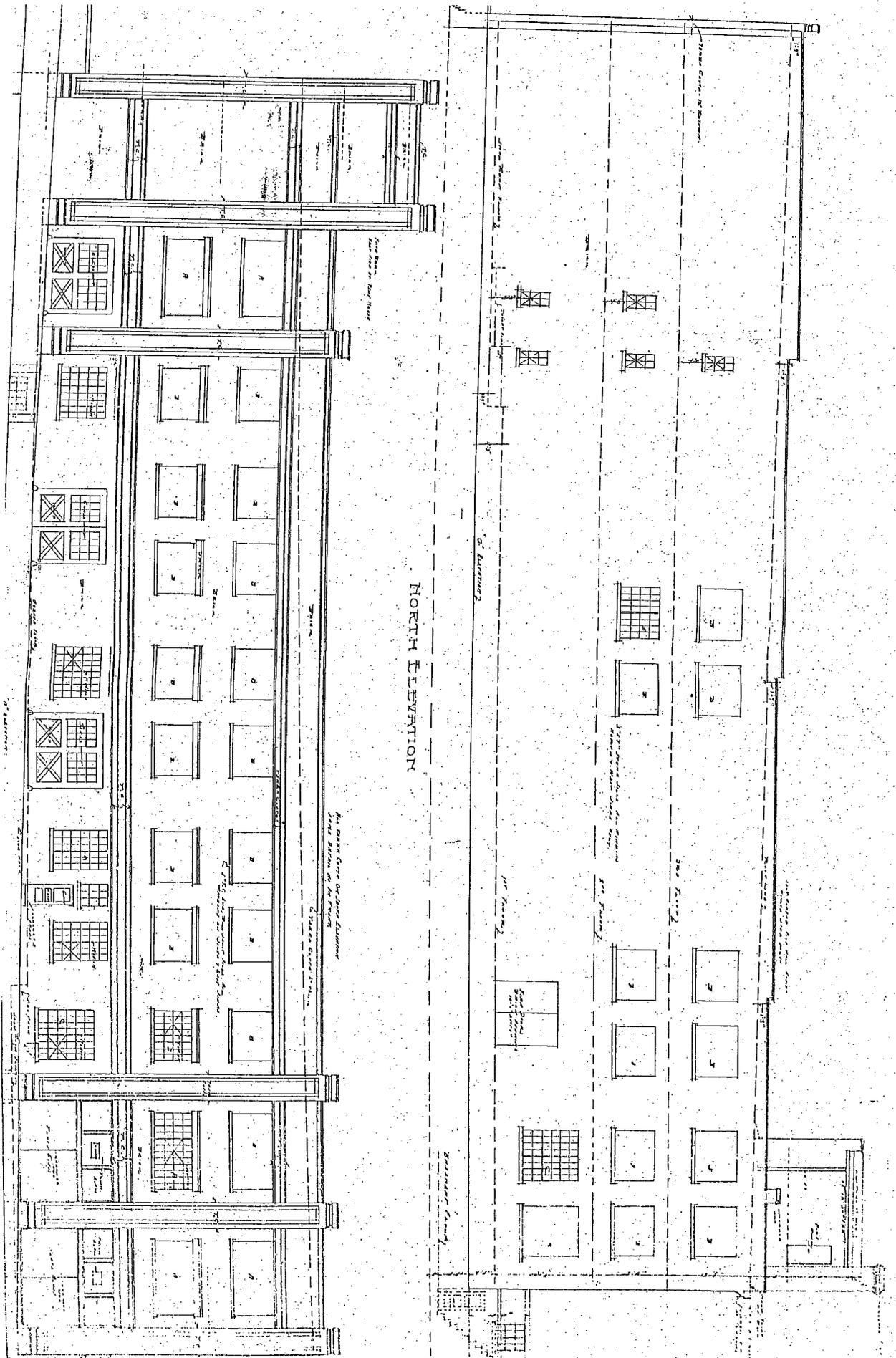








SCALE 1" = 1'-0"



NORTH ELEVATION

See page 100 of the plan  
and section of the plan

See page 100 of the plan  
and section of the plan

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and section of the plan

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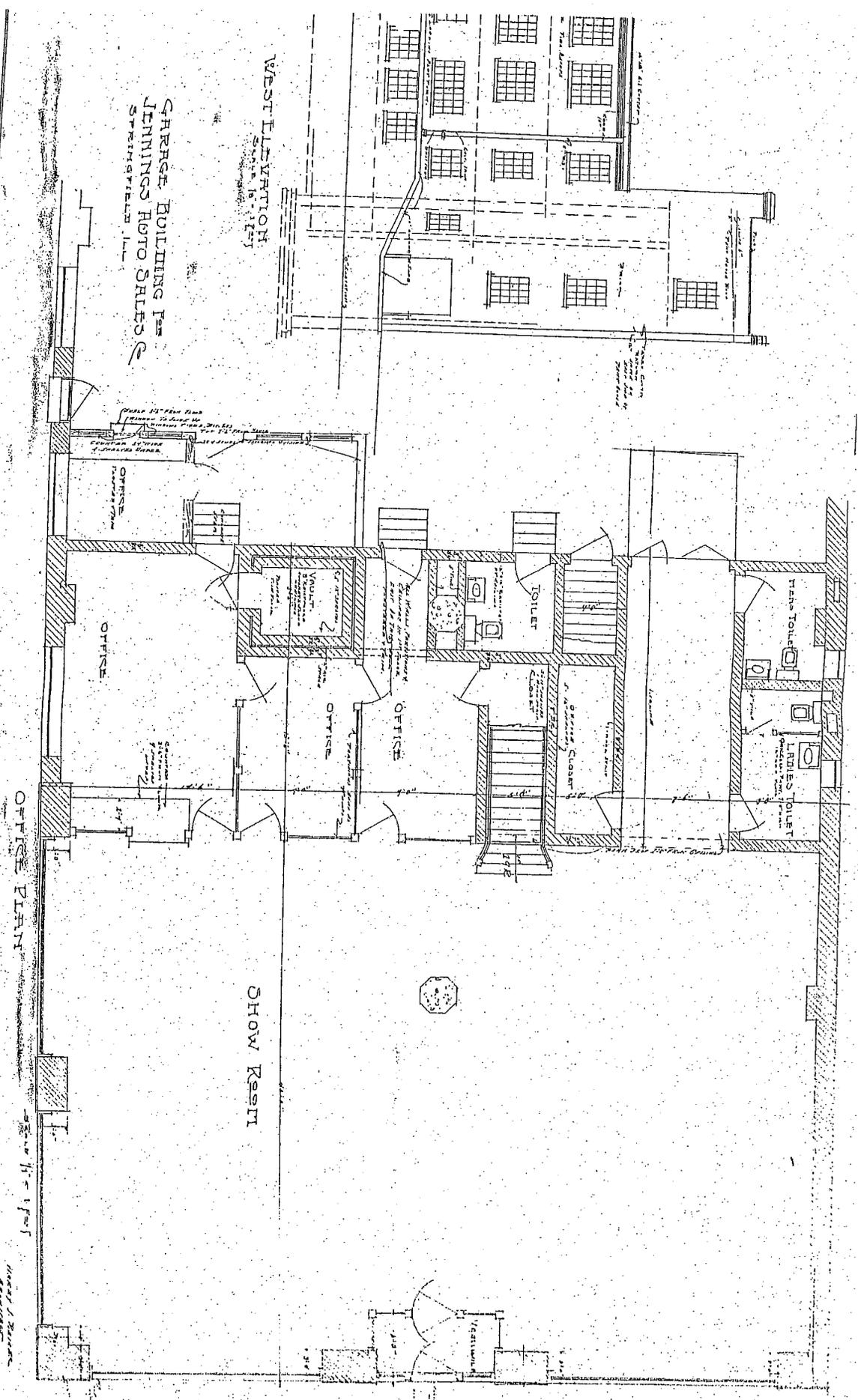
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and section of the plan

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and section of the plan

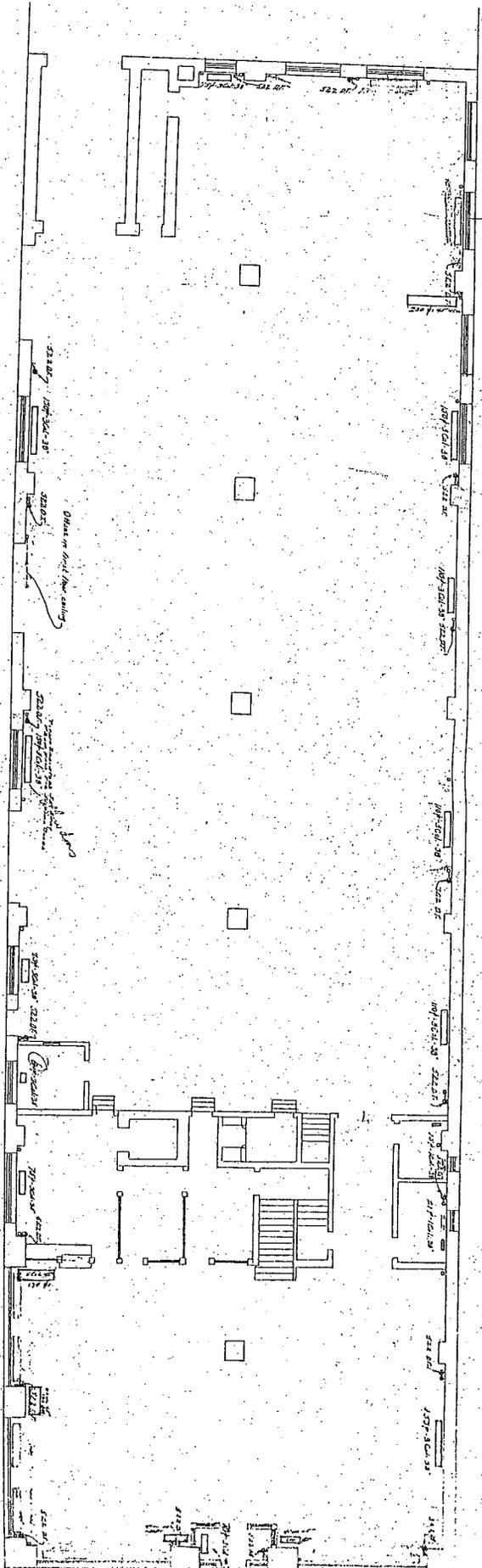
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and section of the plan

See page 100 of the plan  
and section of the plan

See page 100 of the plan  
and section of the plan



HARRY J. BROWN  
 ARCHITECT  
 SPRINGFIELD, ILL.



First Floor Plan  
 Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"  
 Webster Foundation System

GARAGE BUILDING 1/2  
 JENNINGS PHOTO SALES  
 SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

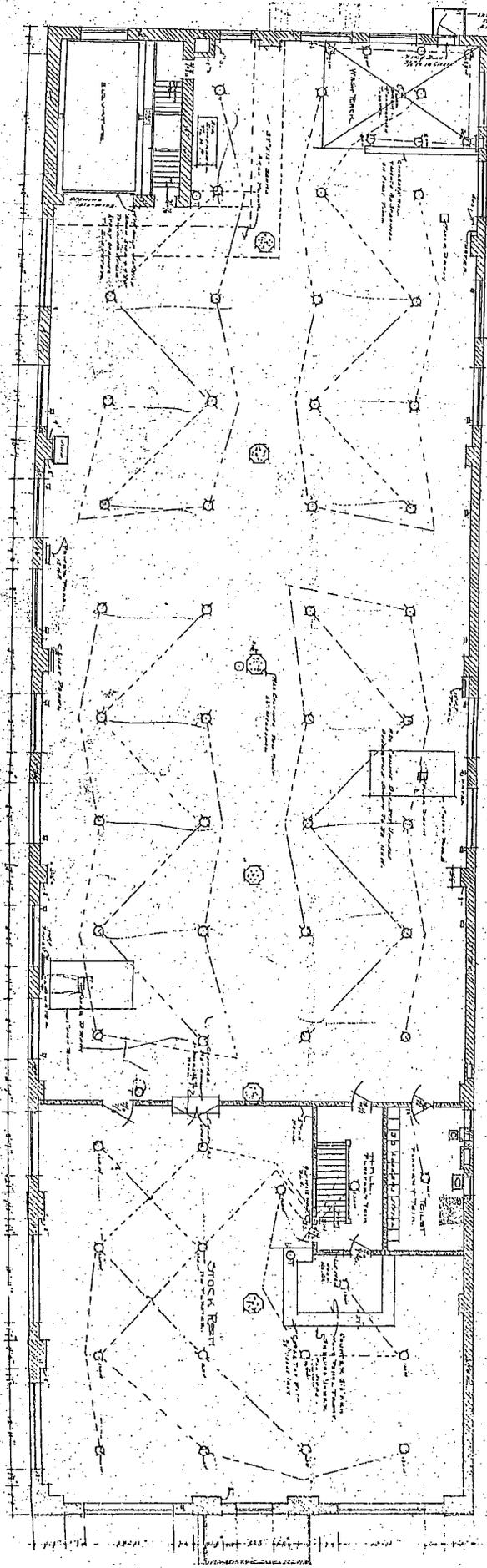
ARCHITECT  
 J. W. ...  
 SPRINGFIELD, ILL.



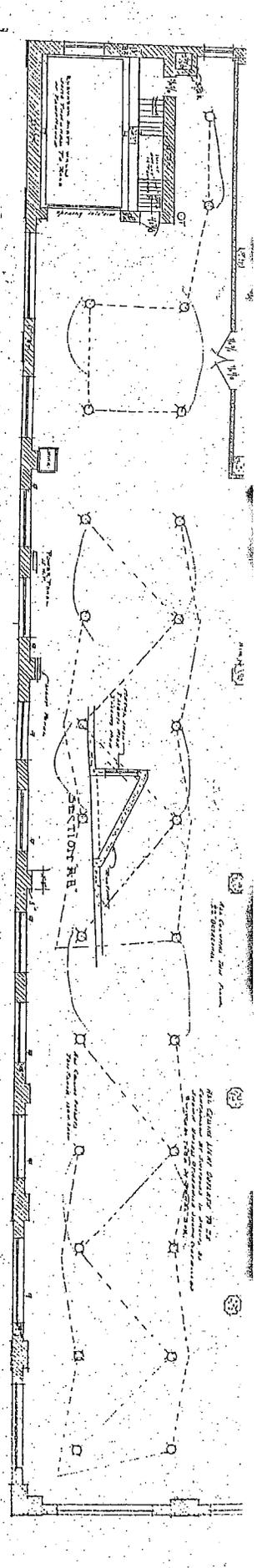
SECOND Floor Plan  
 GARAGE BUILDING FOR  
 JENNINGS PHOTO STUDIO  
 SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

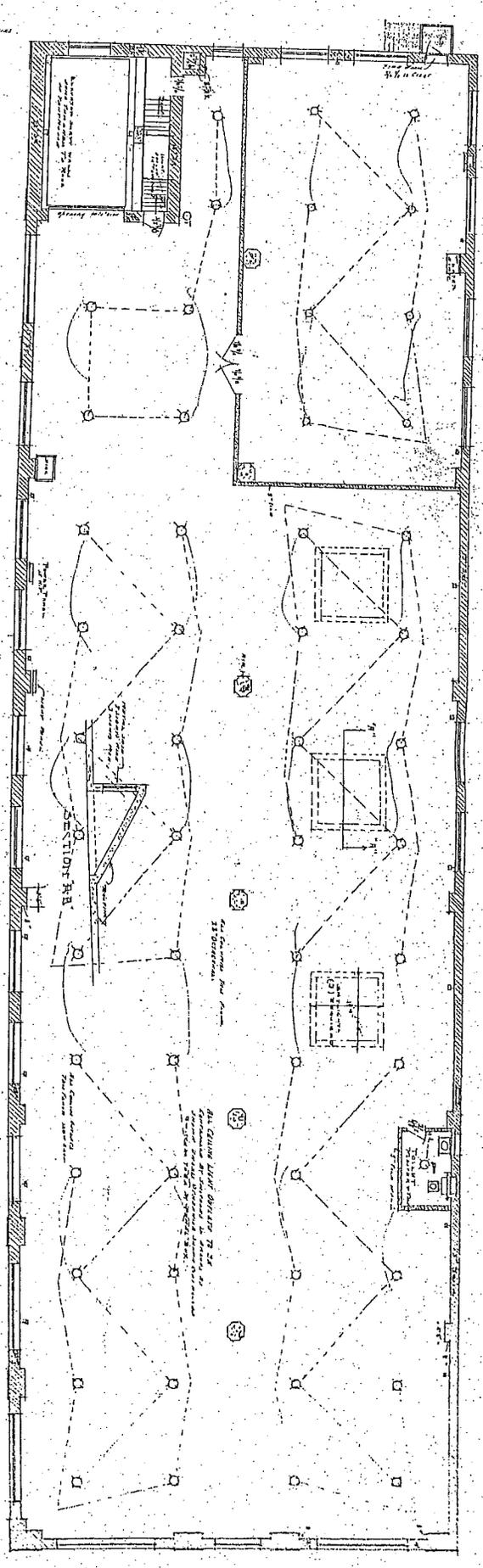
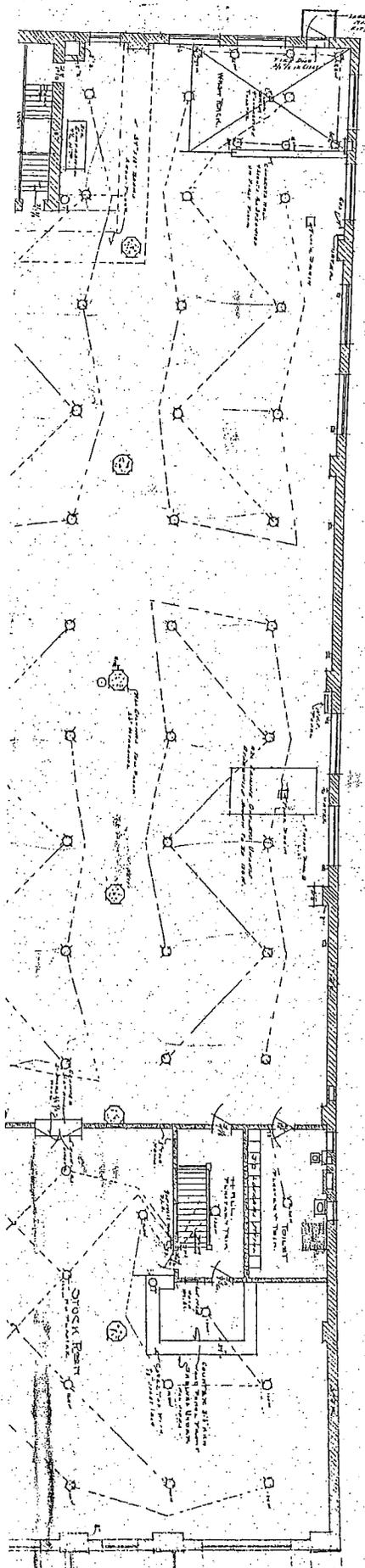
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

ARCHITECT  
 JENNINGS PHOTO STUDIO  
 SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

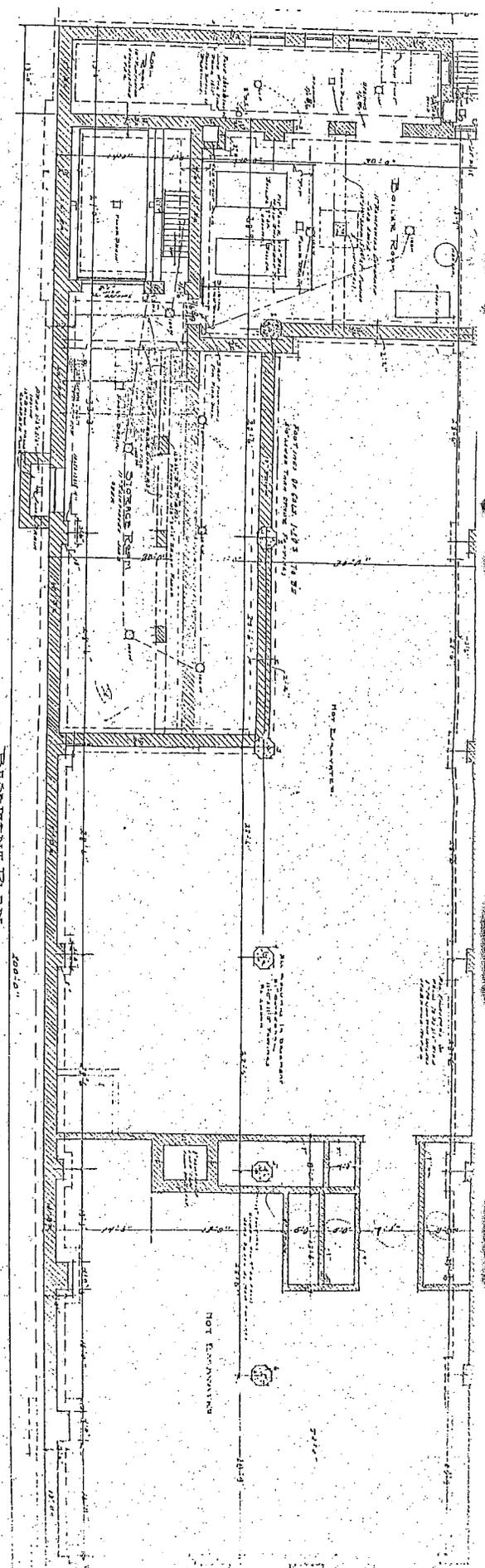
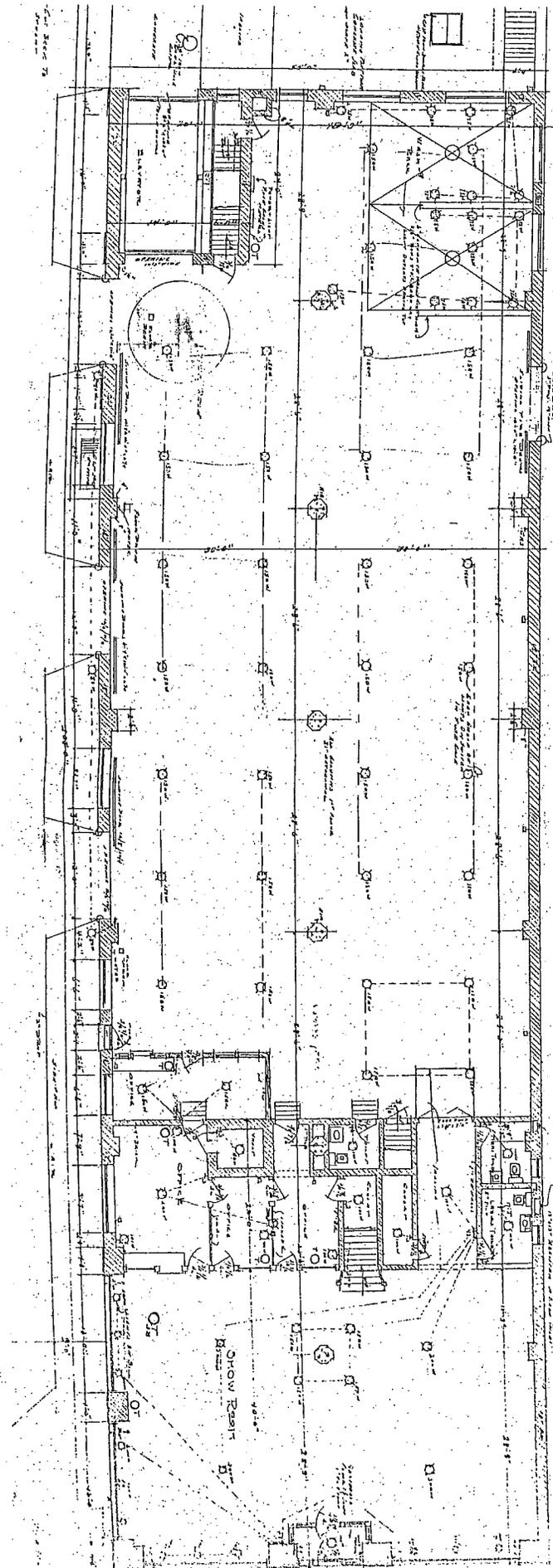


THIRD Floor Plan





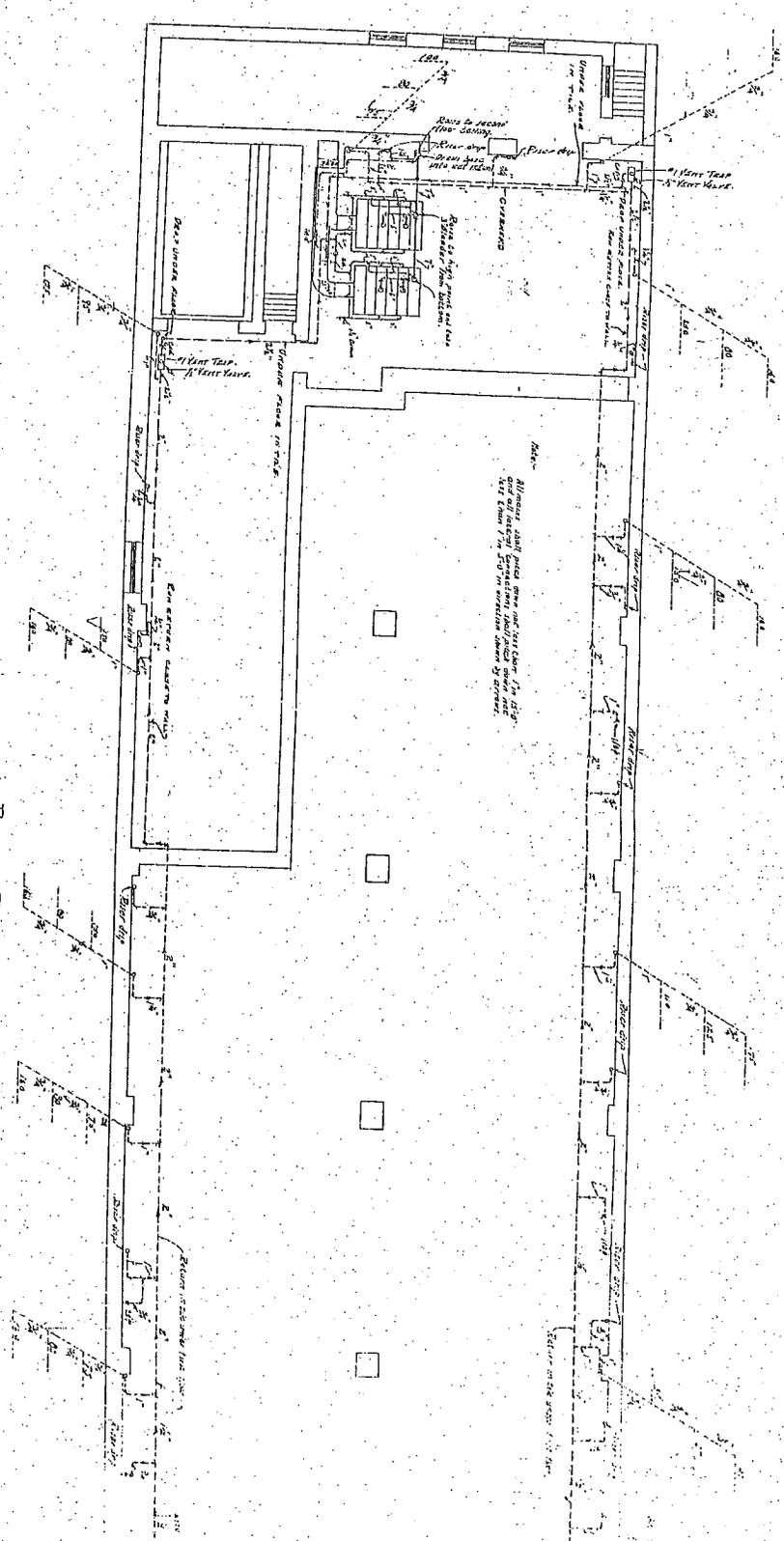
THIRD FLOOR PLAN



PROJECT PLAN

100'-0"

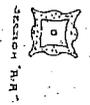
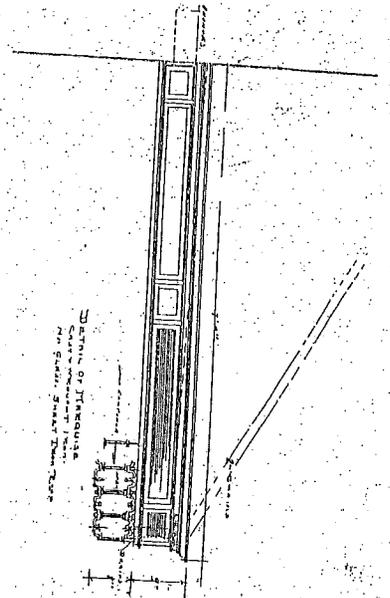
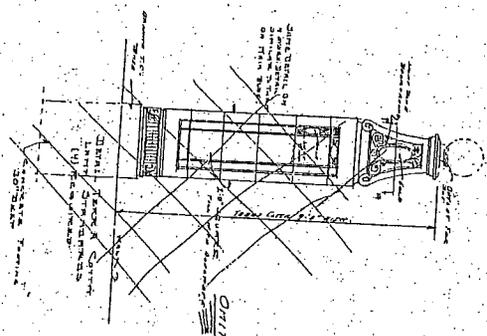
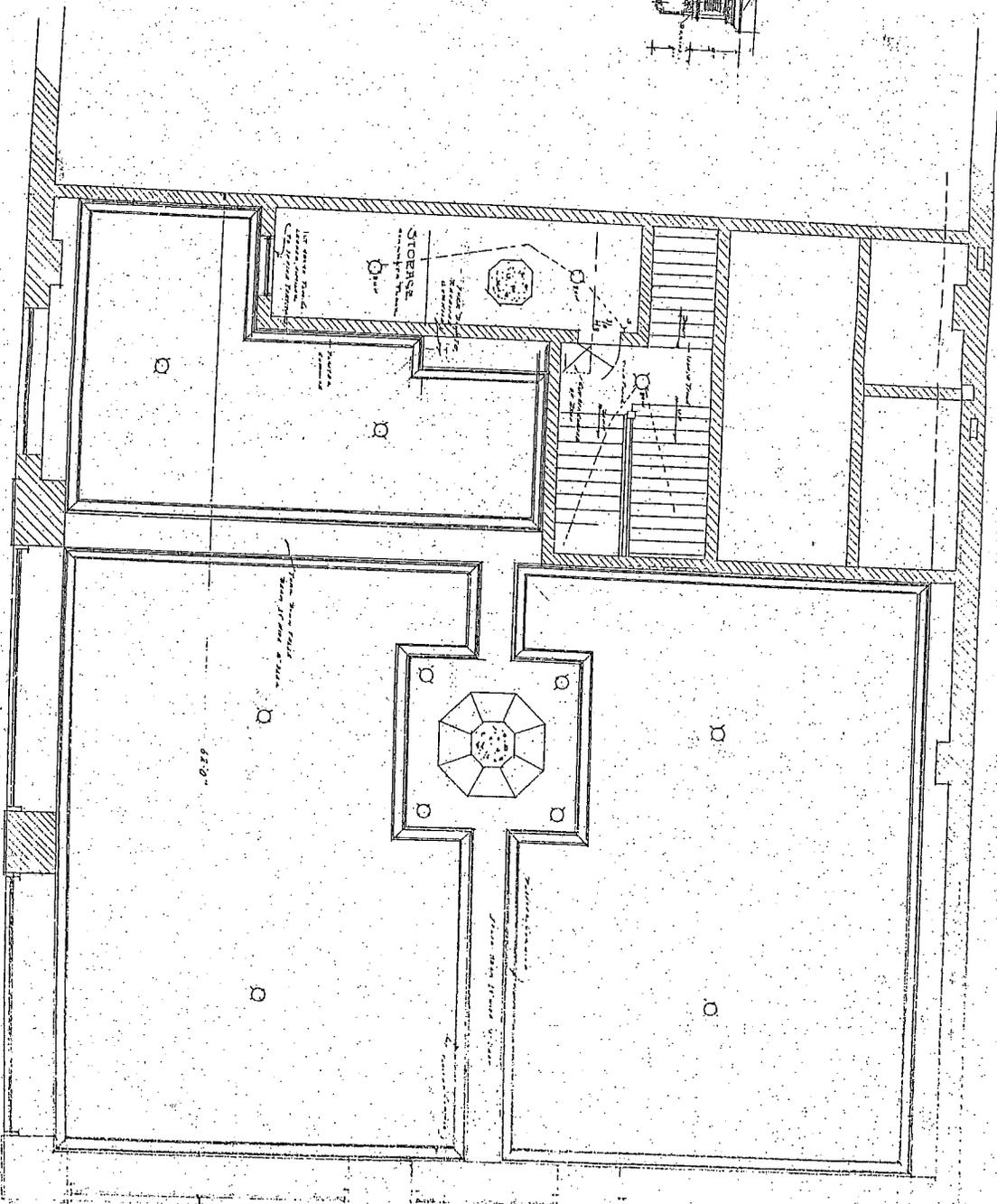
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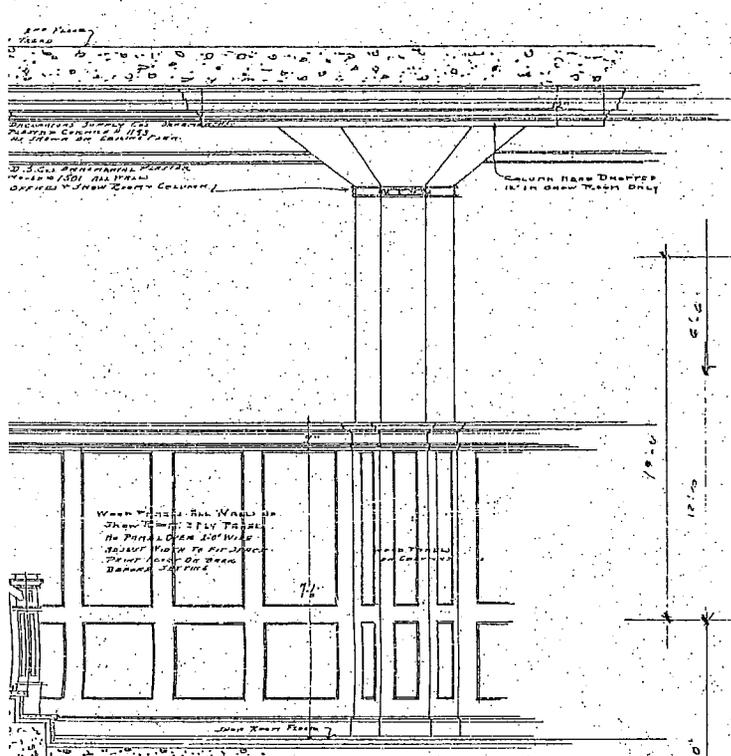
Basement Plan  
 6/24/10  
 Water Management System

GARRETT BULLOCK  
 JENNINGS HORN  
 STRANFIELD

SHOW ROOF CEILING PLAN  
GARAGE BUILDING FOR  
JENNINGS AUTO SALES Co.



Architectural drawing  
JENNINGS AUTO SALES Co.  
1911

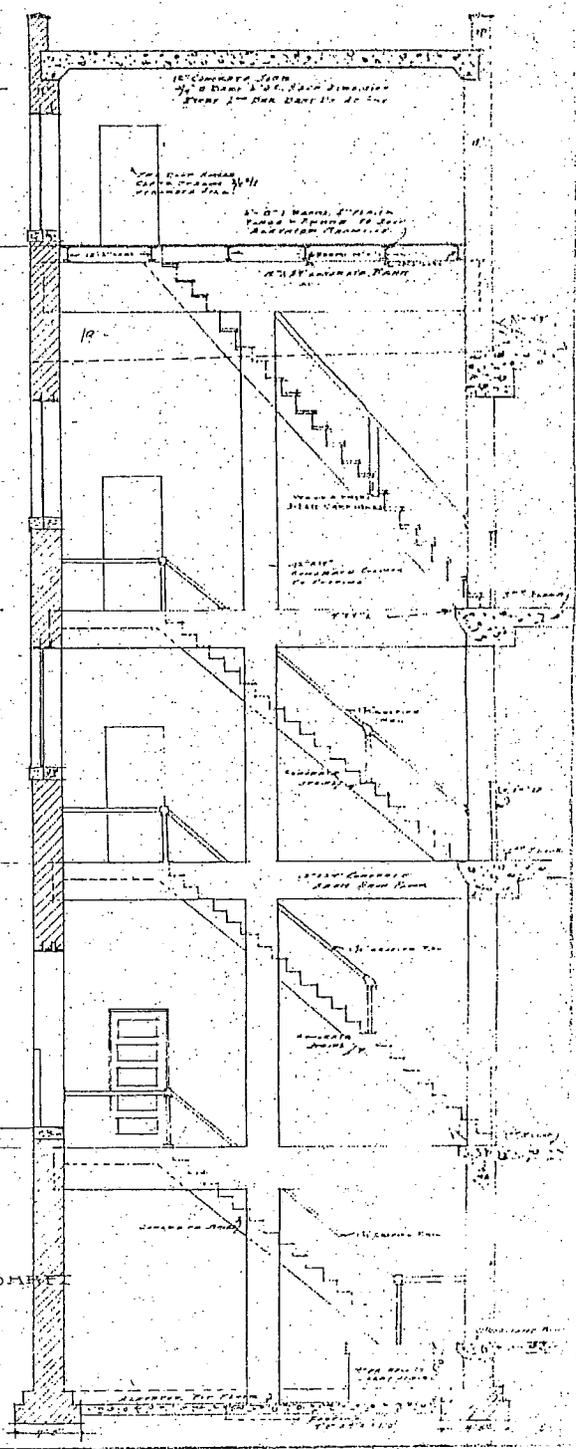


STAIRS

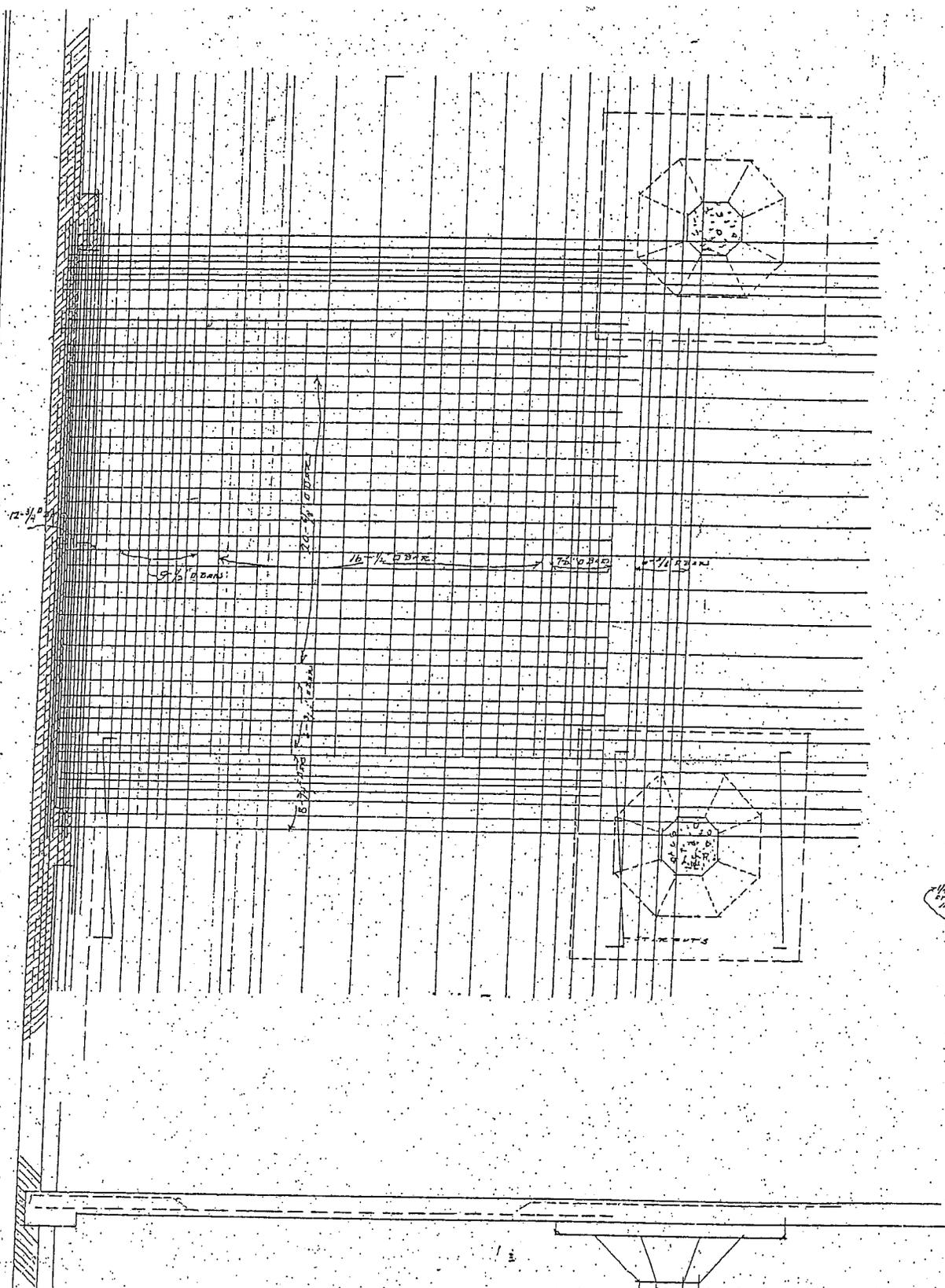
GARAGE BUILDING FOR  
JENNINGS AUTO SALES  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

SECTION THRU  
ELEVATOR SHAFT

HARRY J. HENSON  
ARCHITECT  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS





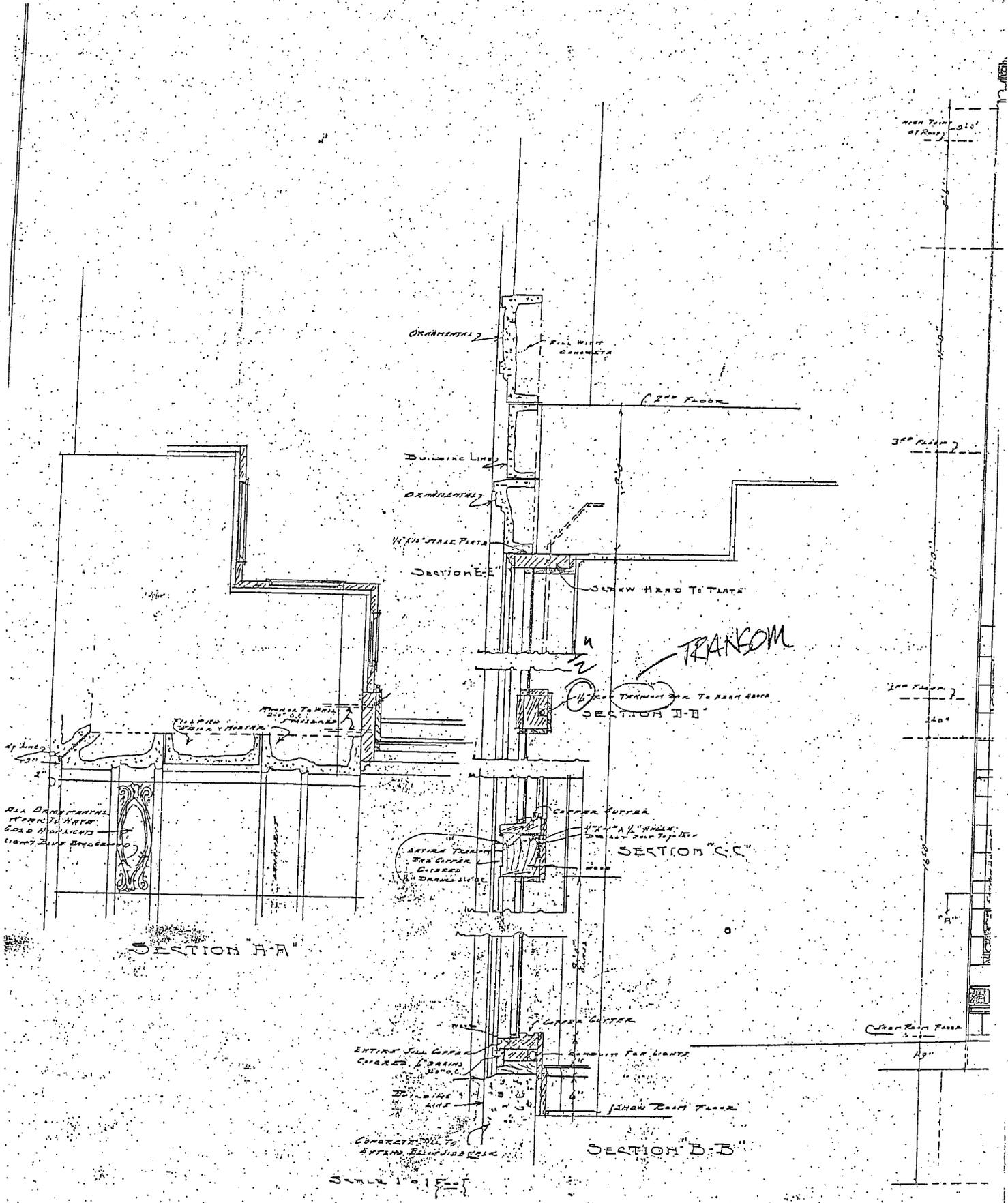


1/4" x 10" STEEL  
 CHANNELS  
 16" HIGH  
 12" WIDE  
 2" DEEP

PLAN & SECTION  
 TYPICAL FLOOR PANEL

ARRANGEMENT AND QUANTITY  
 OF STEEL SUBJECT TO CHANGE  
 CONCRETE BAR CO. PATENT TO BE USED

I  
 +  
 GARAS  
 JENNIN



ALL DRAIN PIPING  
TO BE  
LEAD PIPE  
LIGHT BLUE BRASS

SECTION "A-A"

ENTIRE FULL COPPER  
CHARGED DRAIN  
PIPE

CONCRETE TO  
STAFF BEHIND WALL

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

ORNAMENTAL

FILL WITH  
CONCRETE

2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR

BUILDING LINE

ORNAMENTAL

1/4" IRON PIER

SECTION "E-E"

SHEW HEAD TO TRANS

TRANSCOM

1/4" IRON TRANSOM BAR TO BEAM ABOVE

SECTION "II-II"

SECTION "C-C"

COPPER GUTTER

4" x 1/4" BRASS  
DOWN TO BEAM TOGETHER

SECTION "B-B"

COPPER GUTTER

CONCRETE FOR LIGHTS

SHOW ROOM FLOOR

SECTION "D-D"

NEAR TOP  
OF ROOF

3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR

1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR

Show Room Floor

UPPER



**Illinois Historic  
Preservation Agency**

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • Teletypewriter Only (217) 524-7128

Voice (217) 782-4836

[www.illinois-history.gov](http://www.illinois-history.gov)

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Timothy J. Davlin, Mayor of the City of Springfield  
Bissi DiCenso, Staff, Springfield Historic Sites Commission

FROM: Amy Easton, Assistant Coordinator, National Register and Survey *AHE*

DATE: December 16, 2005

SUBJECT: Preliminary Opinion of the Jennings Ford Automobile  
Dealership

The Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership, located at 431 S. Fourth Street, is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for commerce for its use as an automobile dealership in Springfield. The building was designed by leading Springfield architect Harry Reiger and built for prominent Ford dealer Frank Jennings in 1919. The dealership is important as it relates to the early history of the automobile in the city. Few remaining structures built specifically as automobile dealerships on Springfield's original "automobile row" remain today. They illustrate the social, physical and cultural changes brought about by the automobile in the first half of the twentieth century. At the time Jennings built his dealership on Fourth Street, its location was one of the most desirable commercial areas of the city, adjacent to what was once Springfield's most fashionable neighborhood, Aristocracy Hill, centered around the Illinois Executive Mansion.

The Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership maintains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register. Its period of significance is from 1919, the year it was built, until 1955, the fifty-year cutoff for significance for the National Register.

Tampa, 06000443,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

FLORIDA, MARTIN COUNTY,  
Seminole Inn,  
15885 SE Warfield Blvd.,  
Indiantown, 06000442,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

GEORGIA, COBB COUNTY,  
Moore, Tarleton, House,  
4784 Northside Dr.,  
Acworth, 06000453,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Krause Music Store,  
4611 N. Lincoln Ave.,  
Chicago, 06000452,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

ILLINOIS, DU PAGE COUNTY,  
Downtown Hinsdale Historic District,  
Roughly bounded by Maple St., Lincoln St., Garfield St. and Second St.,  
Hinsdale, 06000011,  
LISTED, 5/30/06

ILLINOIS, HENRY COUNTY,  
Kewanee Public Library,  
102 S Tremont,  
Kewanee, 06000447,  
LISTED, 5/31/06  
(Illinois Carnegie Libraries MPS)

ILLINOIS, KANKAKEE COUNTY,  
Downtown Momence Historic District,  
Roughly Washington St., from N. Locust to Pine and Dixie Hwy., from 2nd to  
River,  
Momence, 06000449,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

ILLINOIS, KANKAKEE COUNTY,  
Durham--Perry Farmstead,  
459 N. Kennedy Dr.,  
Bourbonnais, 06000445,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

ILLINOIS, SANGAMON COUNTY,  
Jennings Ford Automobile Dealership,  
431 S. Fourth St.,  
Springfield, 06000450,  
LISTED, 5/31/06

ILLINOIS, WILL COUNTY,