

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Mill Block Historic District

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 101-129 North Kansas Avenue

N/A

 not for publication

City or town Topeka

N/A

 vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66603

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
___ national ___ statewide X local Applicable National Register Criteria: X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date _____

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 ___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register
 ___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register
 ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
6	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
6	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCIAL: Warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCIAL: Warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH REVIVALS: Classical Revival

OTHER: Minimal Commercial (Early-Mid 20th Century)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE
CONCRETE

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

The Mill Block Historic District (District) is a compact, five-building district along Topeka's main commercial street, Kansas Avenue, just north of the central business district. The District occupies a three-acre area on the west side of N Kansas Avenue between W 1st Avenue and NW Crane Street. The alley and rail siding form the west boundary while N Kansas Avenue forms the east boundary. Buildings within the Mill Block Historic District date from the late nineteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century. The warehouses range in height from one to four stories. Located adjacent to rail lines and the site of the founding of the City of Topeka, North Kansas Avenue warehouse buildings saw continued usage throughout the period of significance. The five buildings within the district have good integrity as intact examples of early-twentieth century warehouse and light industrial buildings commonly located near rail lines. All five buildings contribute to the Mill Block Historic District.

Elaboration

SETTING

Five contributing buildings comprise the District. The largest building (101 N Kansas Avenue) anchors the south end of the District (*Photo 1*). The buildings get progressively smaller as the District moves north. The adjacent building to the north (109 N Kansas Avenue) is three stories (*Photo 2*). The two center buildings and a recessed addition are two stories (*Photo 3*). The building at the north end of the District is one story (*Photo 4*). The buildings share common characteristics, including masonry construction and simple facades with restrained ornament. The minimal architectural features, including the restrained classical entry at 101 N Kansas Avenue or the stepped parapets at 125 and 129 N Kansas Avenue, clearly convey the era of construction for each of the buildings in the District. Older buildings have limestone secondary walls while relatively newer buildings have brick or concrete walls (*Photo 6*). Early-twentieth century buildings have loading docks adjacent to the areas where railroad sidings were once located. Later buildings incorporate features related to truck transport rather than rail, including loading docks that abut the roadway or provide vehicular entrances or space for parking.

Kansas Avenue runs perpendicular to a flat stretch of the Kansas River (The Kaw). This alignment, rather than true north, orients the orthogonal grid of downtown Topeka. The center four lanes of N Kansas Avenue slope up beginning at W First Avenue and continuing across the Kansas River one block to the north. The street surface is elevated above the sidewalk level of the buildings in the District. Concrete sidewalks and the west lane of Kansas Avenue at grade abut the buildings on the east. A gravel alley, the former location of the railroad siding, abuts the buildings on the west (*Photo 5*). The two-lane W 1st Avenue and the abandoned road bed of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad run parallel to the south boundary of the District. Although the road bed is abandoned, the tracks are extant in that block (*Photo 7*). Warehouses and small light-industrial complexes occupy the west half of the block and surrounding blocks. The surrounding buildings are smaller in scale, constructed later, or have less integrity than the buildings in the District.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

INDIVIDUAL RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS

1. 101 N Kansas Avenue

Parkhurst Davis Mercantile Building
Photographs: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Contributing

1909

Classical Revival

This four-story corner warehouse building is clad in stucco on the east and south elevations. The symmetrical front (east) façade contains two sets of tall paired window openings set in two recessed bays flanking a center bay. The center bay contains the main entry on the first story and paired windows on the upper stories. Evoking references to the Classical Revival style, the stone entry consists of a round arched opening with flanking ionic pilasters supporting an entablature. A stone cornice runs the length of the primary facades above the first story. Brick corbelling and a stone cornice cap the building. The red brick façade is visible in locations where the stucco is cracked. Most of the historic window openings containing one-over-one wood sashes were infilled with smaller non-historic windows or concrete block, but their outlines remain visible beneath the stucco. The north and west elevations are field stone. Standing-seam metal panels clad the north elevation. The seven irregular bays on the west elevation each contain a single window opening with a cut stone sill and brick quoins. Most of the openings on this elevation are infilled with cinder blocks. This elevation has a brick parapet concealing a flat roof. Warehouse buildings have always stood on this site. The five-story building constructed on this site in 1901 was destroyed in a fire in 1904. The four-story building constructed on this site in 1904 was destroyed in a fire in 1909. The current four-story building was constructed after the 1909 fire (*Figure 12*). The building stands on the site of Topeka's first cabin constructed in December 1854, as indicated on a cornerstone dedicated by the Topeka chapter of the D.A.R. and inscribed "This building marks the site of the first cabin in Topeka where the town company was organized. Dec. 5, 1854" (*Figure 10*). The brick façade is visible in historic photographs from the 1960s. The stucco cladding was added after 1965, making it a non-historic alteration. Covering the historic window openings and some of the ornament on this highly utilitarian building does not compromise its integrity as it continues to convey its historic warehouse function and the period in which it was constructed.

2. 109 N Kansas Avenue

International Harvesters of America Building
Photographs: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7

Contributing

1904

Other: Minimal Commercial (Early-Mid Twentieth Century)

The three-story warehouse building has a brick façade and field stone secondary walls. The symmetrical façade has five bays with two large window openings flanking a tall center entry. The segmental arched openings contain paired one-over-one hung replacement windows. The historic windows on the first and second floors were one-over-one double-hung wood sashes with single-light transoms while the windows on the third floor were six-over-six double-hung wood sashes without transoms. The window openings on the first two stories retain their transoms. Corbelled brick courses and recessed brick panels provide minimal ornament on this utilitarian building. The flat parapet with glazed tile coping conceals a flat roof. The secondary north and west elevations contain historic window openings with brick quoins and rowlock brick segmental arches. The secondary elevations have replacement windows as well. A red brick mechanical penthouse rises above the roofline at the northwest corner of the building. A non-historic one-story shed-roofed addition spans the length of the west elevation and is clad entirely in standing seam metal panels. The shed sits atop a concrete loading dock. Three vehicular openings with metal overhead doors and a single pedestrian opening with a metal slab door pierce this elevation. The building shares a party wall with the four-story building to the south.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

3. 121 N Kansas Avenue

Photographs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Two Contributing

c. 1925, 1930

Other: Minimal Commercial (Early-Mid Twentieth Century)

This two-story two-part commercial block is composed of two separate buildings. The north building is brick with modified storefronts. The first story of the front (east) elevation has three irregular bays with one wide storefront opening that occupies the south half of the façade while two narrow fields occupy the north half. The storefronts have steel beams spanning the openings. The glass block in the south storefront appears to be historic as it is visible in a photograph taken prior to 1967. The center wing historically contained a vehicular entrance with an overhead metal door and now contains red brick infill, a pedestrian entrance with a metal slab door and a single multi-light steel window. The north bay historically contained a single pedestrian entrance and now contains red brick infill and single multi-light steel window. Eight regular bays, each containing a single window opening, pierce the second story on the east elevation. The second story contains non-historic one-over-one aluminum replacement windows with concrete sills. Corbelled brick courses and recessed brick panels provide minimal ornament in the flat parapet. The blank south wall is stucco while the rear (west) wall is brick. The south elevation has four irregular bays on the first story with two narrow windows infilled with concrete block flanking two wider entries. The north entry is a pedestrian entrance with a pair of hollow core metal doors. A vehicular entrance with an overhead garage door fills the south entry. The second story has six regular bays, each containing a single opening with non-historic one-over-one aluminum windows and brick sills. The north and south walls are shared party walls, except where exposed and clad in stucco. This building was constructed c. 1925.

The south building attaches to the southwest corner of the north building. The east elevation is brick with an exposed concrete frame, multi-light metal windows with pivot sashes, and no ornament. A one-story concrete loading dock with a metal shed roof and multiple vehicular entrances spans the lot on the east side of the building between 121 N Kansas Avenue and 109 N Kansas Avenue. The loading dock, set back from the street to accommodate freight vehicles, is visible in the 1950 Sanborn map and 1957 aerial photograph (*Figures 9 and 16*). The west elevation is brick with small rectangular multi-light metal windows. This building was constructed in 1930.

4. 125 N Kansas Avenue

Lux Building

Photographs: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6

Contributing

1919

Other: Minimal Commercial (Early-Mid Twentieth Century)

The two-story two-part commercial block has brick walls with stone trim. Brick pilasters divide the first story façade into two bays. While this building was constructed in 1909, the facade was altered to match the facade of 129 N Kansas Avenue when it was built in 1919, replacing the earlier commercial storefronts visible in historic photographs. Each pilaster capital has a geometric stone ornament that resembles a pendant but is flush with the brick. Each bay contains a wide vehicular entrance. Soldier course lintels span the openings. The second story contains four large window openings with soldier course surrounds. Painted concrete block fills the historic openings. Stone squares articulate the corners of the openings in both stories. A stone beltcourse continues across the facade from 129 N Kansas Avenue. A simple stone cornice caps the second story. The stepped and peaked parapet has stone coping that conceals a flat roof. The rear (west) elevation is painted field stone with arched window openings filled with non-historic windows.

5. 129 N Kansas Avenue

Contributing

Mill Block Historic District

Shawnee County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

Lux Building

1919

Photographs: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6

Other: Minimal Commercial (Early-Mid Twentieth Century)

This one-story warehouse has brick walls and stone trim typical of such utilitarian commercial/industrial buildings of this period. Brick pilasters divide the façade into four bays. Each pilaster capitals has a geometric stone ornament that resembles a pendant but is flush with the brick. The south bay contains a former entrance infilled with concrete block and a window infilled with brick recessed within the opening. The center-south bay contains an entrance with a pair of hollow core metal doors. Small rectangular window openings flank the entrance. The south window is infilled with recessed brick. The north opening has a non-historic aluminum window. The center-north bay has a short band of four non-historic aluminum windows. The north bay has a singular vehicular entrance infilled with concrete block. Stone squares articulate the corners of the masonry openings. A stone beltcourse runs the length of the façade above the windows, continued from 125 N Kansas Avenue. The stepped and peaked parapet has stone coping and a stone nameplate inscribed "1919." The exposed concrete frame with brick fill is painted on the rear (west) elevation.

INTEGRITY

The Mill Block Historic District retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials to adequately convey associations with and feelings about its historic function, the area of significance, and the era in which the buildings were constructed. The warehouses of the Mill Block Historic District have retained their historic function and few alterations have been made. The most common changes within the District are window and door replacement and infilling historic openings. Many of these alterations have left the original openings and spatial relationships of the buildings intact. The warehouses within the Mill Block Historic District retain sufficient integrity to convey the evolution of warehousing and distribution in downtown Topeka, from rail transport to road and truck transport.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1904-1965

Significant Dates

1904

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1904 with the construction date of the earliest resource and ends in 1965, the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have significance but no more specific date can be defined.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The Mill Block Historic District (District) is significant under Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE as an intact example of a warehouse and industrial corridor. Five intact industrial warehouses on the west side of North Kansas Avenue (south of the Kansas River) form a cohesive historic district comprised of a single property type. The District contains five contributing resources and no non-contributing resources. These resources reflect the light industrial and commercial warehouse development that occurred along the river at the north end of the downtown commercial core once the presence of railroads was firmly established in Topeka. Constructed between 1904 and 1930 as wholesale warehouse and distribution facilities, the buildings communicate the evolution of this industry from rail to road (truck) transportation. The resources continue to function as warehouses. The massing and functional features of these resources, such as loading docks and vehicular entrances, convey the primary historic function of the District while the minimal architectural features communicate the era of construction for each resource.

Elaboration

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILL BLOCK

The history of the Mill Block is closely associated with the early commercial development of Topeka and its reliance on the railroad as it advanced from territorial settlement to state capital. While the buildings date to the first quarter of the twentieth century, the industrial and warehouse character of the block was established more than a decade earlier with the arrival of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad. The United States Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act on May 30, 1854, establishing the Kansas Territory at the heart of the Louisiana Purchase. On December 5, 1854, nine pioneering strangers with a common desire to see the Territory admitted to the Union as a free state, met in a rude log cabin on the south bank of the Kansas River for the expressed purpose of establishing a town.¹ The newly formed Topeka Association selected a site and laid out one and a half square miles to be surveyed for a town site. They aligned the street grid perpendicular to a relatively straight section of the Kansas River. Eighteen narrow lots lined each side of the long blocks. Beginning at 1st Avenue, the Original Town site extended south to 14th Street (*Figure 11*). The blocks north of 1st Avenue varied in size depending on their proximity to the Kansas River, though the blocks flanking Kansas Avenue retained the same dimensions as the blocks to the south. Located near the east side of the new town site, Kansas Avenue was the primary street at the heart of the new town. On March 20, 1858, the Topeka Association deeded the block on the east side of Kansas Avenue north of 1st Avenue to the Topeka Mill Company, establishing the name of the property as the "Mill Block."²

Settlers arriving in the new town constructed temporary and semi-permanent wood dwellings vital to their initial survival, though they soon discovered limestone as an abundant source of building material. The first

¹ Frye W Giles, *Thirty Years in Topeka: A Historical Sketch* (Topeka, KS: Geo. W Crane & Co Publishers, 1886) 21. Google Books, available at http://books.google.com/books?id=TxcVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=fry+giles+thirty+years+in+topeka&hl=en&ei=ftmqTtrdJLLsQLy6TyDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=twopage&q&f=true (accessed 5 December 2014). Although the log cabin that qualifies as Topeka's first structure is no longer standing, a cornerstone on 101 N Kansas Ave commemorates the location of the cabin and the date of the town founding (*Figure 11*).

² Quit Claim Deed, Topeka Association to the Topeka Mill Company, March 20, 1858. Item #7540, Franklin Loomis Crane Collection, #320, Box 1 Scrapbook. Kansas Memory online database. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/7540> (accessed February 26, 2015).

Mill Block Historic District

Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas

County and State

commercial entities established were those necessary to support the growing town, specifically a saw mill, a grist mill, hotels, and a variety of mercantile businesses. The mills were constructed along the north and south banks of the Kansas River while the commercial businesses lined Kansas Avenue. Masonry buildings (limestone side and rear walls with brick facades) erected throughout the 1850s and 1860s infilled the streetscape of Kansas Avenue, though the blocks at the north end of the street, the area that included the District, remained underdeveloped through the 1880s.

Development Associated with Railroads

As is common in many pioneer cities west of the Mississippi River, the railroad played an integral part in the early success of the Topeka. The ability to import and export raw materials and finished products provided boundless opportunities for entrepreneurs and manufacturers. The two major rail lines to first service Topeka were the Union Pacific Eastern Division Railroad (Union Pacific), arriving in 1866, and the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railway (AT&SF), which began construction both east and west from Topeka in 1868.³ The Rock Island Railroad arrived in 1887 under a contract between Union Pacific and the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Railway Company for use of the Union Pacific tracks.⁴ While the Union Pacific rail line did not cross the Kansas River to enter downtown Topeka, the line from the Atchison ended at the newly constructed shops just east of Adams Street. The line then extended north and south, running parallel to Adams Street, six blocks east of Kansas Avenue, and crossing the Kansas River via a railroad bridge. In addition to constructing the railroad through Topeka, the company also decided, with some financial incentive from the City, to build its shops and offices in Topeka. This decision meant a great number of jobs for the citizens of Topeka and provided a boost to the local economy. In 1884, the AT&SF railroad built a four-story office building at the southeast corner of West 9th and Jackson Streets, the site of what would eventually become the ten-story headquarters for AT&SF.

Although the Civil War effectively halted development, the aftermath brought renewed interest in Topeka, and the population doubled within six months of the war's end. In 1869, with the city firmly established as the state capital and construction of the east wing of the Kansas Statehouse underway, public and private projects greatly improved the appearance of the developing settlement. The City graded Kansas Avenue, laid curbstones from Third Street to Eighth Avenue, and paved the gutters. Roughly five hundred new, permanent houses were constructed that year, and permanent structures were erected for a wide variety of commercial establishments. The Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroads, along with the newly-completed iron bridge to North Kansas greatly increased the ability of Topeka's businesses to trade merchandise and materials.

Improvements made during the 1860s and 1870s laid the foundation for the exponential growth of Topeka during the 1880s. The unparalleled expansion of railroads throughout the country connected large cities and small towns in unprecedented ways. The AT&SF railroad, with its office headquarters and maintenance shops in the community, enhanced Topeka's economy with the addition of roughly five thousand jobs. Utilities improved the quality of life in Topeka with the introduction of gas illumination in 1870 and electric illumination in 1882. With these opportunities and amenities, Topeka grew rapidly. The streetscapes in the original town site filled in with one- to four-story masonry buildings constructed to house all of the commercial, industrial, and cultural concerns needed to sustain a modern town.

³ Giles, 274.

⁴ "A Brief Historical Overview of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad," reproduced from *Yard Clerical Manual* (Rock Island Railroad, 1970), available online through the Rock Island Technical Society: <http://www.rits.org/www/histories/RIHistory.html> (accessed January 26 2015).

Mill Block Historic District

Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas

County and State

Unchecked speculation and interest from outside investors led to a building boom in the 1880s. In addition to the miles of sidewalk and street pavement laid throughout the city in 1888, several thousand new buildings were erected, including commercial and warehouse buildings along Kansas Avenue and residential dwellings on the surrounding streets. The Missouri Pacific and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railroads entered Topeka in 1886 and 1887, respectively.⁵ The Rock Island line crossed the Kansas River at Topeka Avenue, four blocks west of Kansas Avenue, and traveled east-west through Topeka at 1st Avenue. Access to rail lines allowed businesses to grow significantly, with large mills employing over three hundred people located in North Topeka and mills and packing houses on the east side of Kansas Avenue.⁶ The history of the Mill Block begins in the mid-1880s. The first buildings constructed on the Mill Block appear around the time of completion of these rail lines and their associated spurs. In 1883, the entire east half of the block, the location of the District, was undeveloped land (*Figure 5*). The Topeka Manufacturing Company operated a small complex with an office building, furnace shop, and steam machinery at the northwest corner of the block while three tiny one-story dwellings occupied the remainder of the west half of the block.⁷ By 1885, the Topeka Cracker Company constructed a narrow two-story building at 127 N Kansas Avenue.⁸

The 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map illustrates the distinct change in the block that occurred following the construction of the Rock Island line (*Figure 6*). The Topeka Coal Company and the W.L. Layson lumber yard occupy the west half of the block with multiple railroad spurs curving off the main line at 1st Avenue. A three-story passenger depot for the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad occupied the southwest corner of the intersection of 1st and Kansas avenues. In addition to the Topeka Cracker Company Building, one other building occupied lots in the District. The Sells Brothers, capitalists and proprietors of a local circus, invested in the construction of a three-story building at 109 N Kansas Avenue, subsequently named the Sells Building. The Parkhurst Davis Mercantile Company, wholesale grocers, moved to this building from a location on the north side of the river. The warehouse building occupied two narrow lots and had a full-width loading dock across the west elevation, adjacent to the railroad spur. By 1896, Parkhurst Davis Mercantile Company expanded into a three-story addition constructed on the lot adjacent to the north side of the existing building while the rest of the District remained undeveloped (*Figure 7*). In 1901, Parkhurst Davis constructed a building at 101 N Kansas Avenue at the corner of the block. The cornerstone of the building, dedicated by the Topeka Chapter of the D.A.R., indicates that this corner was the location of the 1854 log cabin where the Town Company was first organized (*Figure 10*). When Parkhurst Davis moved next door to its new building, International Harvesters of America, a farm implement storage warehouse, occupied the earlier building. These buildings fully utilized the railroad via the spur that ran the full length of the alley to ship and receive goods stored within the warehouses. The buildings in the District continue to operate as warehouses, maintaining the historic function of the District.

Twentieth Century Growth

In the District, the twentieth century began with significant destruction paired with construction. The warehouse buildings at 101 and 109 N Kansas Avenue stored a wide variety of goods from food and mattresses to chemicals and ammunition. Occasionally the storage of these materials proved dangerous. On February 13, 1904, a devastating fire destroyed the 1901 Parkhurst Davis Mercantile Company Building as well as the

⁵ Giles, 281.

⁶ "North Topeka is Industrial Center" and "Thomas Page Mill Does Big Business," *Topeka Daily Capital*, November 29, 1913, page 13. Microfilm. Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.

⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, *Topeka*, 1883, Sheet 2.

⁸ City of Topeka, City Directory, 1885. This narrow building was demolished by 1919 when the Lux Building was constructed on the site in 1919.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

adjacent Sells Building.⁹ The City of Topeka issued owner Joab Mulvane a building permit five months later for the construction of a five-story building at 101 N Kansas Avenue to house the Davis Mercantile Company.¹⁰ The commemorative cornerstone marking the importance of the site was salvaged and installed in the new building. A second building permit was issued to Lewis Hazelbart nearly a year later in 1905 for the building at 109 N Kansas Avenue for International Harvesters.¹¹ Another enormous fire on February 12, 1909 destroyed the five-year-old building at 101 N Kansas Avenue.¹² The adjacent building at 109 N Kansas Avenue was slightly damaged but remained standing. In August of 1909, the City issued a permit to the Davis Mercantile Building for the construction of a four-story building.¹³ The commemorative cornerstone marking the importance of the site was again salvaged and installed in the new building (*Figure 10*).

The buildings at 101 and 109 N Kansas Avenue continued to operate as warehouse for various mercantile companies utilizing the railroad as a shipping method through the first quarter of the twentieth century. The new Davis Mercantile Building had a loading platform spanning the long south elevation. The 1905 International Harvesters building had loading platforms on the north and west elevations. The two-story building constructed at 125-127 N Kansas Avenue, completed in 1909, initially housed a cider press and a wholesale grocer. A loading platform spanned the west elevation of this building (*Figure 8*). By 1913, Capital Broom Works (manufacturer) and W.R. Smith & Sons (oysters and celery wholesaler) occupied the building (*Figure 15*).¹⁴ This was one of the smaller manufacturing and wholesale businesses to occupy space along this stretch of Kansas Avenue, similar to the building stock constructed in North Topeka.

In 1919, the character of the District began to shift slightly to reflect the proliferation of the motor vehicle as both a business and personal tool. Samuel E. Lux, Jr. purchased the two-story building and vacant lots at the north end of the Mill Block. Lux constructed a one-story warehouse at 129 N Kansas Avenue for his mercantile business. During construction of the new building, Lux re-clad the façade of the building at 125-127 N Kansas Avenue to unify and update the façades. Lux operated a small filling station at the recessed northeast corner of his new building. The size of the filling station indicates that it was designed to accommodate small personal vehicles rather than large trucks.

The two buildings constructed at the middle of the block also reflect the evolution of the District towards the greater use of trucks for transporting goods rather than the railroad. The two-story building at 121 N Kansas Avenue, constructed 1925 for the Mosby-Mack Motor Company, is a two-part commercial block with a large vehicular entrance at the center of the front and rear façades. The adjacent building to the south is a two-story loading dock addition, completed in 1930 for the Yellow Cab and Baggage Company and constructed at the west half of the lot. Vehicular entrances line the east elevation of the raised concrete loading dock. The location of this addition was designed to accommodate large trucks (*Figure 9*).

⁹ "Topeka (Kan.) \$490,000 Fire, Parkhurst-Davis Mercantile Company Suffers Loss of Plant and Stock," *The New York Times*, Sunday February 14, 1904, p. 3. The Times Machine online database:

<http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1904/02/14/101386514.html> (accessed 4 November 2014).

¹⁰ City of Topeka, Building Permit #11430, 23 July 1904. *City of Topeka Building Permits Index*, online database available through the Kansas Historical Society <http://kshs.org/p/topeka-building-permits-index/13857> (accessed 6 January 2015).

¹¹ City of Topeka, Building Permit #11808, 27 April 1905. *City of Topeka Building Permits Index*, online database available through the Kansas Historical Society <http://kshs.org/p/topeka-building-permits-index/13857> (accessed 6 January 2015).

¹² "Parkhurst-Davis Building Burns: One Man Killed," *The Topeka Daily Capital*, February 12, 1909, p. 1. Vertical File - Buildings, Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

¹³ City of Topeka, Building Permit #14431, 12 August 1909. *City of Topeka Building Permits Index*, online database available through the Kansas Historical Society <http://kshs.org/p/topeka-building-permits-index/13857> (accessed 6 January 2015).

¹⁴ Various advertisements, *Topeka Daily Capital*, November 29, 1913, page 12-16.

Mill Block Historic District

Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas

County and State

The buildings in the District were constructed as warehouses for wholesale companies, primarily grocers and general mercantile businesses. These warehouses stored produce, canned goods, frozen food, and liquor. The buildings maintained this function or related functions for many of the same companies throughout the period of significance. The financial collapse of the Great Depression combined with the reduction in crops due to the Dust Bowl affected the financial stability of the Chicago Rock Island Railway. The company went into receivership in 1933. New management attempted to improve the company by modernizing the equipment, specifically purchasing diesel engines though this it was not enough to save the company.¹⁵ Although freight lines continued to operate into the 1950s, reliance on rail transport began to dwindle in Topeka in the late 1930s, increasingly replaced by the trucking industry.

The Theo. Poehler Mercantile Company, based in Lawrence, operated their Topeka warehouse at 101 N Kansas Avenue from the late 1910s through the 1940s. Seymour Packing Company operated a wholesale food warehouse and office at that location into the 1960s. International Harvesters of America operated a warehouse at 109 N Kansas Avenue into the 1950s. After the company consolidated its operations in a new building on the east side of N Kansas Avenue, Ed Marling operated the warehouse. The Mosby-Mack Motor Company opened a Ford dealership at 121 N Kansas Avenue in 1925. Within five years, the Yellow Cab and Baggage Company occupied the building as a storage facility and constructed the adjacent loading dock. Yellow Cab and Baggage Company operated in this location through the 1940s. Subsequent operations include Hall Lithographing Company in 1950 and Sears Roebuck and Company in 1960. The Lux Mercantile Company operated a warehousing facility at 125-127 and 129-135 N Kansas Avenue from 1919 through the 1950s. The building at 129-135 N Kansas Avenue continued to function as Lux Mercantile Company through the 1960s while the building at 125-127 N Kansas Avenue housed a wholesale fruit company, a frozen food company, a company selling commercial frozen food lockers, and a refrigerator repair shop.¹⁶ Strategically placed loading docks, vehicular entrances, vertical circulation, and open floor plans characterize each of these buildings. Only the minimal architectural details on the façades signify different eras of construction.

The elevated roadway connecting to the Kansas Avenue Bridge was constructed in 1967 when the new bridge replaced the 1898 Melan Arch Bridge, which collapsed in 1965. This new structure may have had negative impacts on the businesses on this block by limiting access from Kansas Avenue, as the road at grade was effectively narrowed to one lane on the west side, although there is accessible space beneath the elevated roadway. The warehousing and distribution businesses located in this block did not have commercial storefront space obscured by the elevated structure.

CONCLUSION

The five contributing resources of the Mill Block Historic District continue to function as they were historically designed in the early twentieth century. The Mill Block Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as an intact example of an industrial corridor within the City of Topeka. Built on the original townsite of the City of Topeka, the resources within the District were constructed in conjunction with significant historical events in the city. The resources reflect the light industrial and warehouse development that occurred near the Kansas River adjacent to rail lines that occurred throughout this area of the city. Still functioning today as warehouses, the resources retain excellent integrity and effectively communicate their historic use and the era in which they were constructed.

¹⁵ "A Brief Historical Overview of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad."

¹⁶ *City of Topeka, City Directories, 1900-1965*. Topeka Room, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bird, Roy D. and Douglass W. Wallace. *Witness of the Times – A History of Shawnee County*. Topeka, Kansas: Shawnee County Historical Society, 1976.

“A Brief Historical Overview of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad,” reproduced from *Yard Clerical Manual* (Rock Island Railroad, 1970), available online through the Rock Island Technical Society: <http://www.rits.org/www/histories/RIHistory.html>. Accessed 26 January 2015.

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Giles, Frye W. *Thirty Years in Topeka: A Historical Sketch*. Topeka, KS: Geo. W. Crane & Co. Publishers, 1886. Google Books, available at http://books.google.com/books?id=TxcVAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=frye+giles+thirty+years+in+topeka&hl=en&ei=ftmqTtrdJL_sQLy6-TyDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=twopage&q&f=true Accessed 5 December 2014.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Topeka, Kansas, 1883, 1889, 1896, 1913, 1950. Available online <http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy.mcpl.lib.mo.us/ks/3094/dateid-000001.htm?CCSI=45n> Accessed 4 November 2014.

“Topeka (Kan.) \$490,000 Fire, Parkhurst-Davis Mercantile Company Suffers Loss of Plant and Stock,” *The New York Times*, Sunday February 14, 1904, p. 3. The Times Machine online database: <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1904/02/14/101386514.html>. Accessed 4 November 2014.

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: Kansas State Historical Society
Topeka Room, Topeka, Shawnee County
Public Library, Topeka, Kansas

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 3 acres

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.059664 -95.670403 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

OR

UTM References

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____ 3 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 _____ 4 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The District is bounded by NW Crane Street on the north, N Kansas Avenue on the east, SW First Avenue on the south and the alley between N Kansas Avenue and NW Jackson Street on the west.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary includes the parcels currently and historically associated with the resource. It encompasses a cohesive group of warehouses and industrial buildings associated with the early industrial history of Topeka.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rachel Nugent, National Register Coordinator; Ellis Mumford-Russell, Associate
organization Rosin Preservation date March 2015
street & number 215 West 18th Street #150 telephone 816-472-4950
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111
e-mail ellis@rosinpreservation.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name See Continuation Sheets
street & number _____ telephone _____

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: **Mill Block Historic District**

City or Vicinity: **Topeka**

County: **Shawnee** State: **Kansas**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography**

Date

Photographed: **November 2014**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 7: Southeast corner of District, intersection of North Kansas Avenue and Southwest First Avenue. View northwest.
- 2 of 7: 101-109 North Kansas Avenue, primary (east) elevations. View southwest.
- 3 of 7: 121-129 North Kansas Avenue, primary (east) elevations. View northwest.
- 4 of 7: Northeast corner of District, intersection of North Kansas Avenue and Northwest Crane Street. View southwest.
- 5 of 7: Northwest corner of District. View southeast.
- 6 of 7: 101-129 North Kansas Avenue, west elevations, from Northwest Jackson Avenue. View east.
- 7 of 7: Southwest corner of District, note proximity of railroad tracks. View northeast.

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Figure 1: Contextual Map.

Figure 2: Site Map.

Figure 3: Contributing Properties Map.

Figure 4: Photo Map.

Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1883.

Figure 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1889.

Figure 7: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1896.

Figure 8: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913.

Mill Block Historic District

Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas

County and State

Figure 9: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950.

Figure 10: Detail of Cornerstone at 101 N Kansas Avenue.

Figure 11. Plan for Topeka, c. 1855, detail of nominated block.

Figure 12. 101 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1909.

Figure 13. 109 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1955.

Figure 14. 109 – 121 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1965.

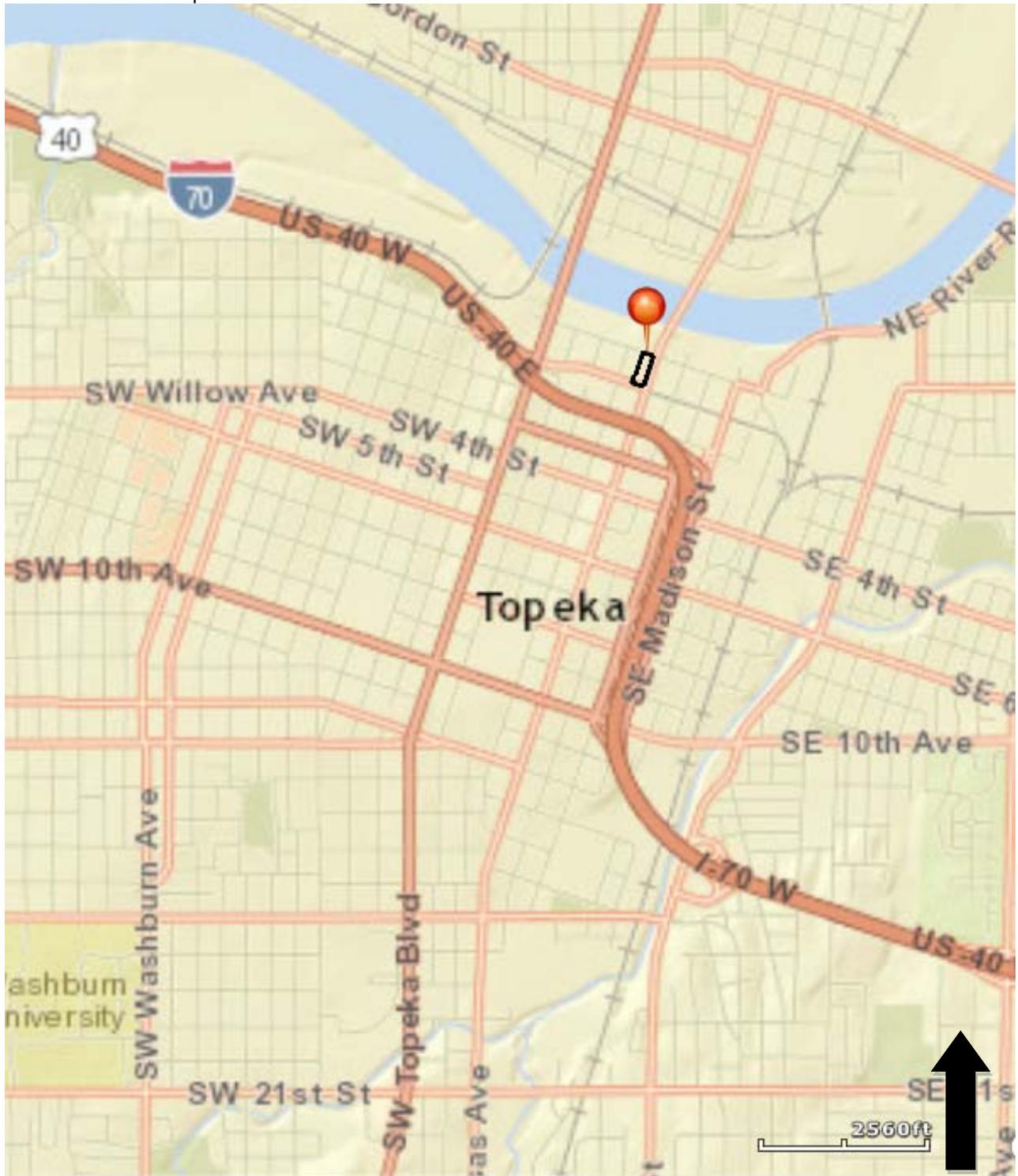
Figure 15. 125 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, 1913.

Figure 16. Aerial photograph, 1957.

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 1: Contextual Map. Source: ArcGIS 2013.



Mill Block Historic District
Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas
WGS84
39.059664, -95.670403

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 2: Site Map. Source: ArcGIS 2013.

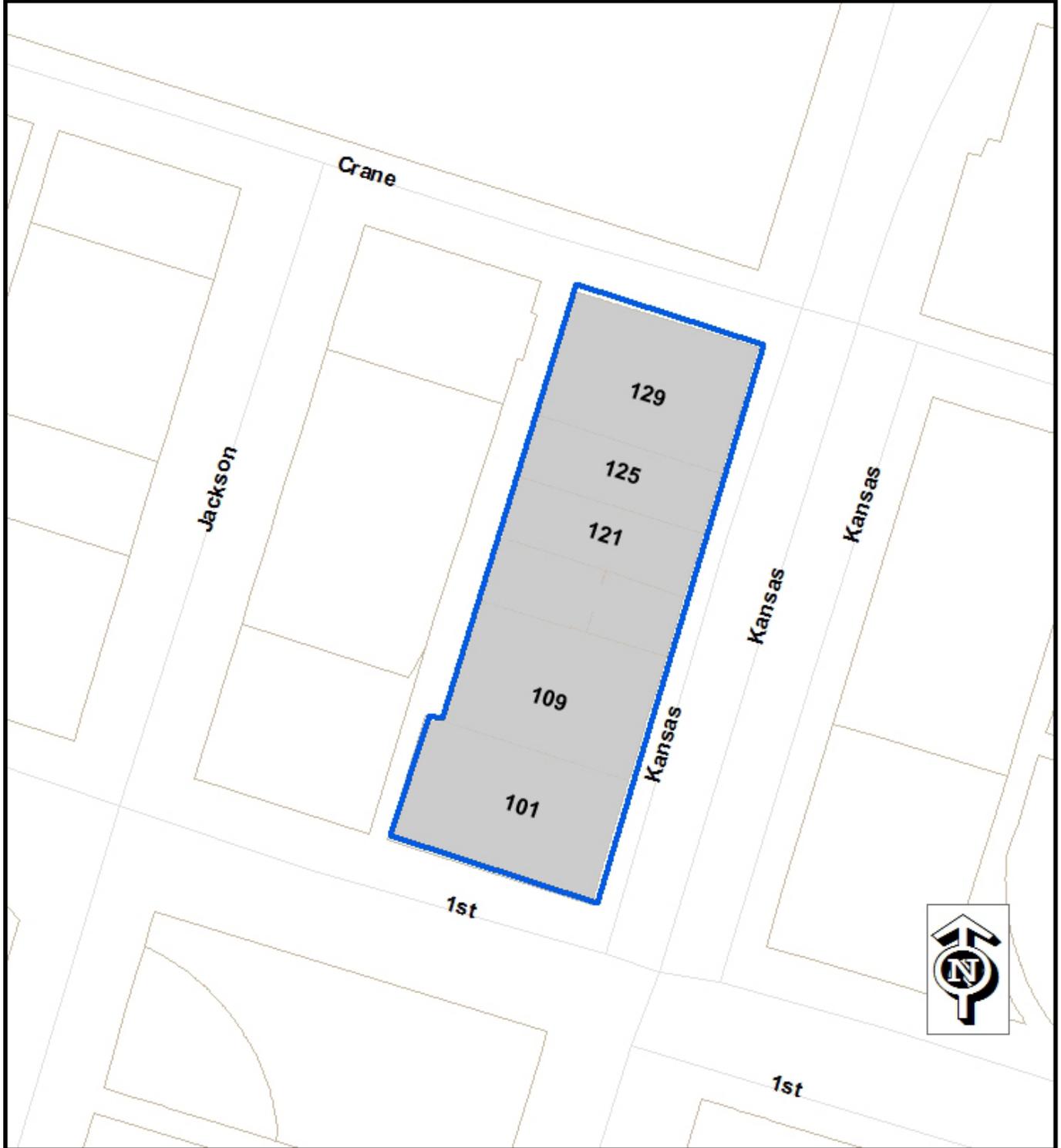


Mill Block Historic District
Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas
WGS84
39.059664, -95.670403

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 3: Contributing Properties Map. Source: City of Topeka Planning Department, 2014.



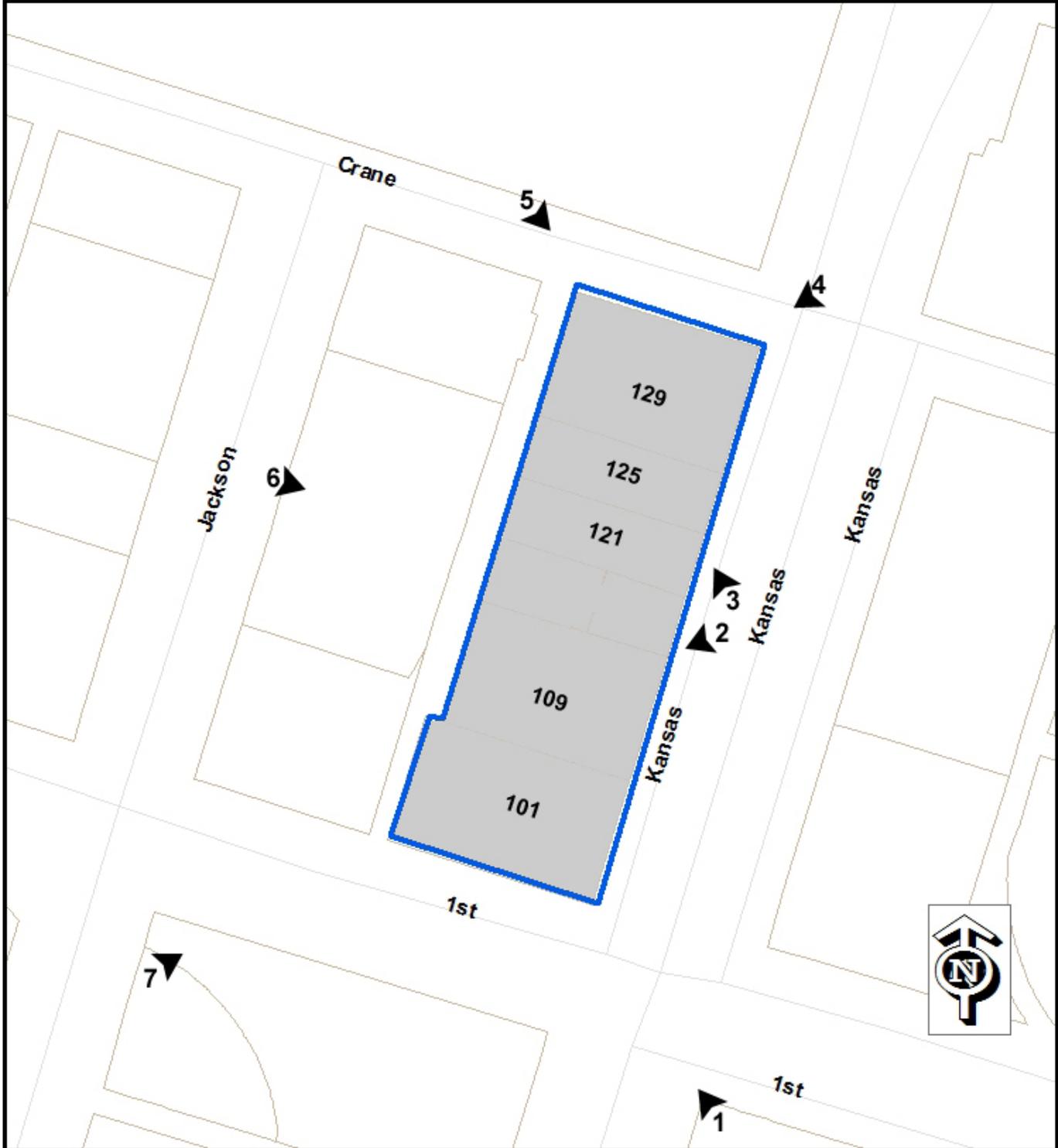
Topeka Planning Department 2014

-  Contributing Properties
-  District Boundaries

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 4: Photo Map. Source: City of Topeka Planning Department, 2014.



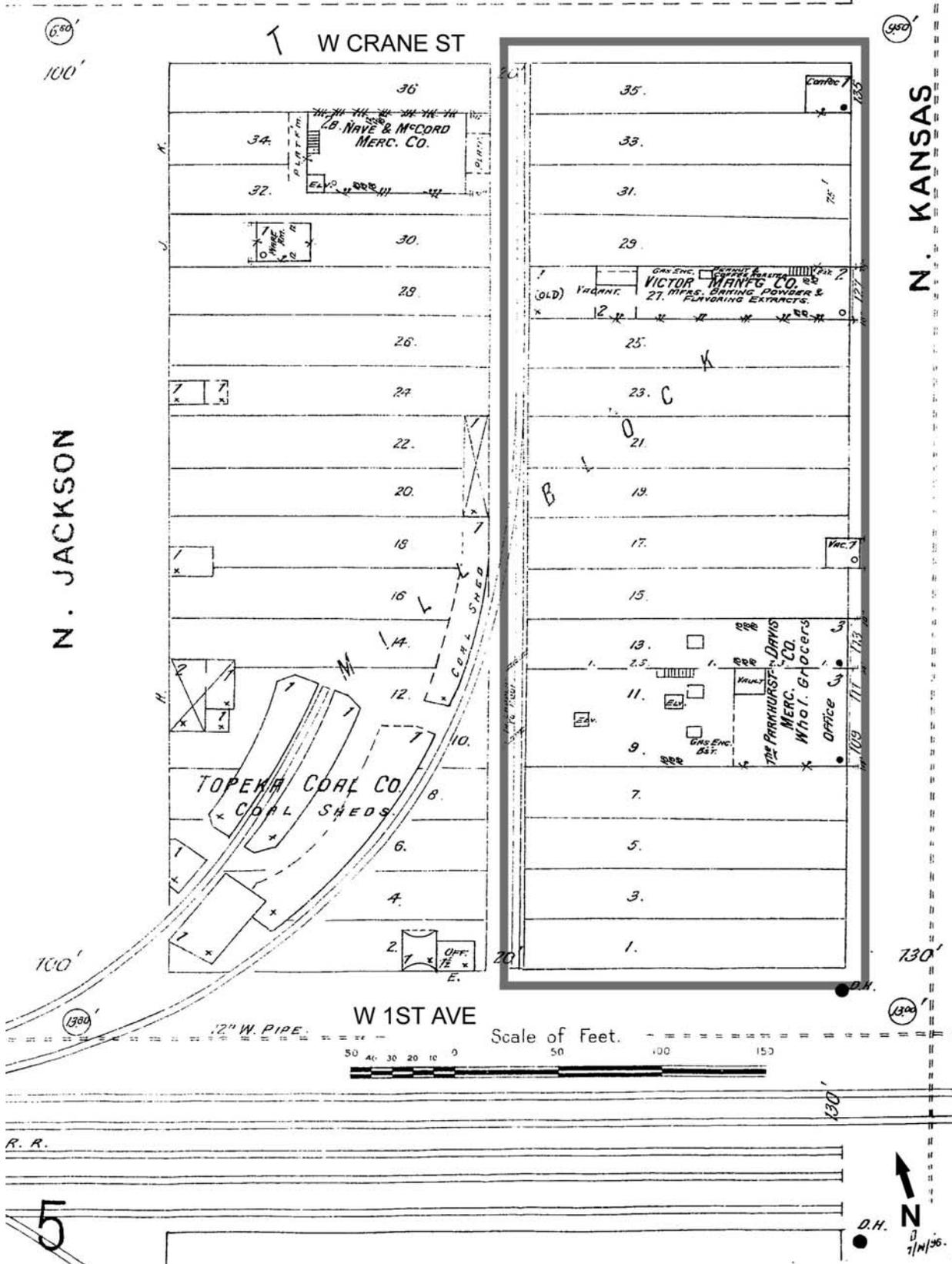
Topeka Planning Department 2014

-  Contributing Properties
-  District Boundaries

Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

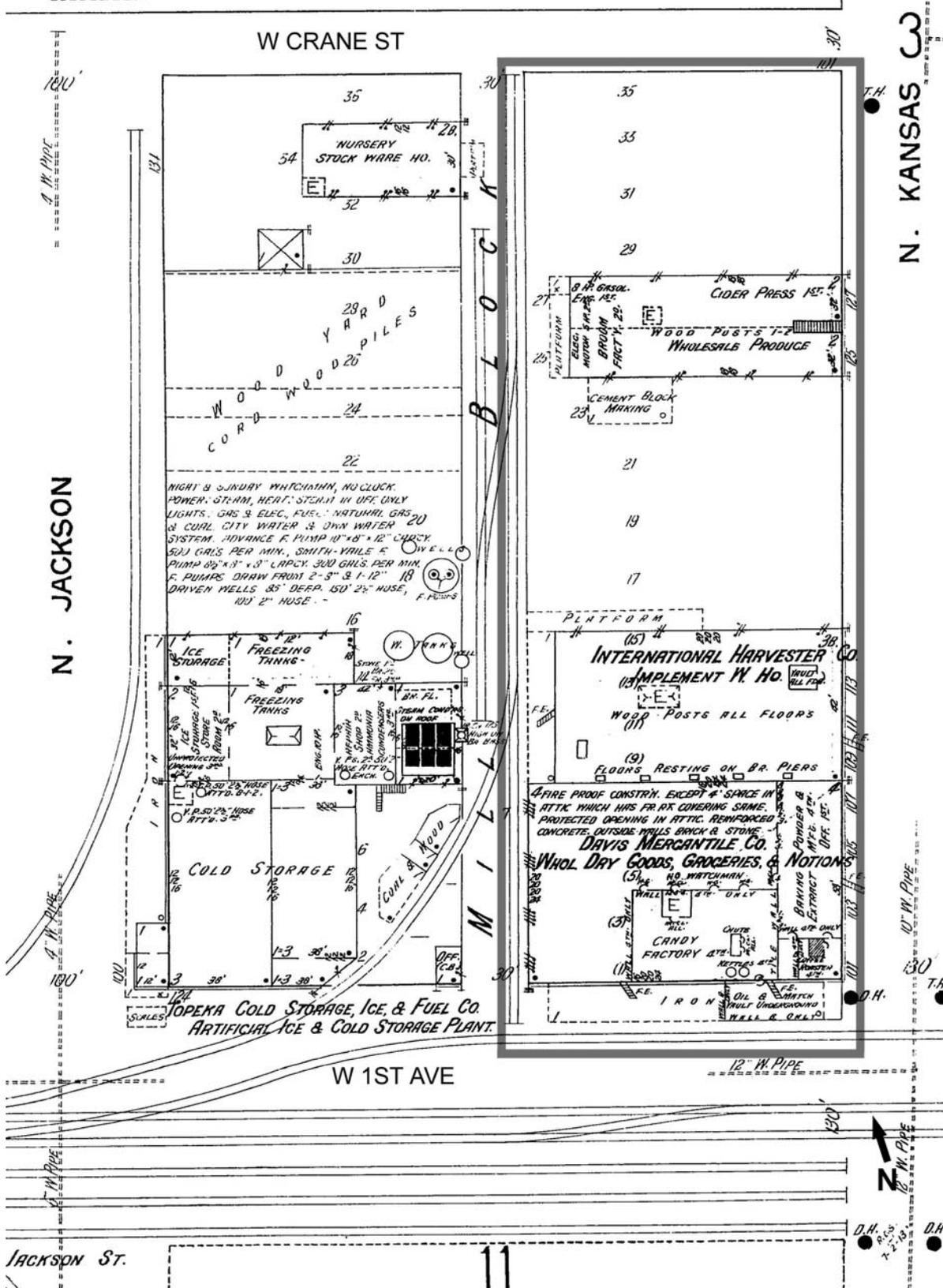
Figure 7: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1896. Source: Mid-Continent Public Library, online database, 2014.



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

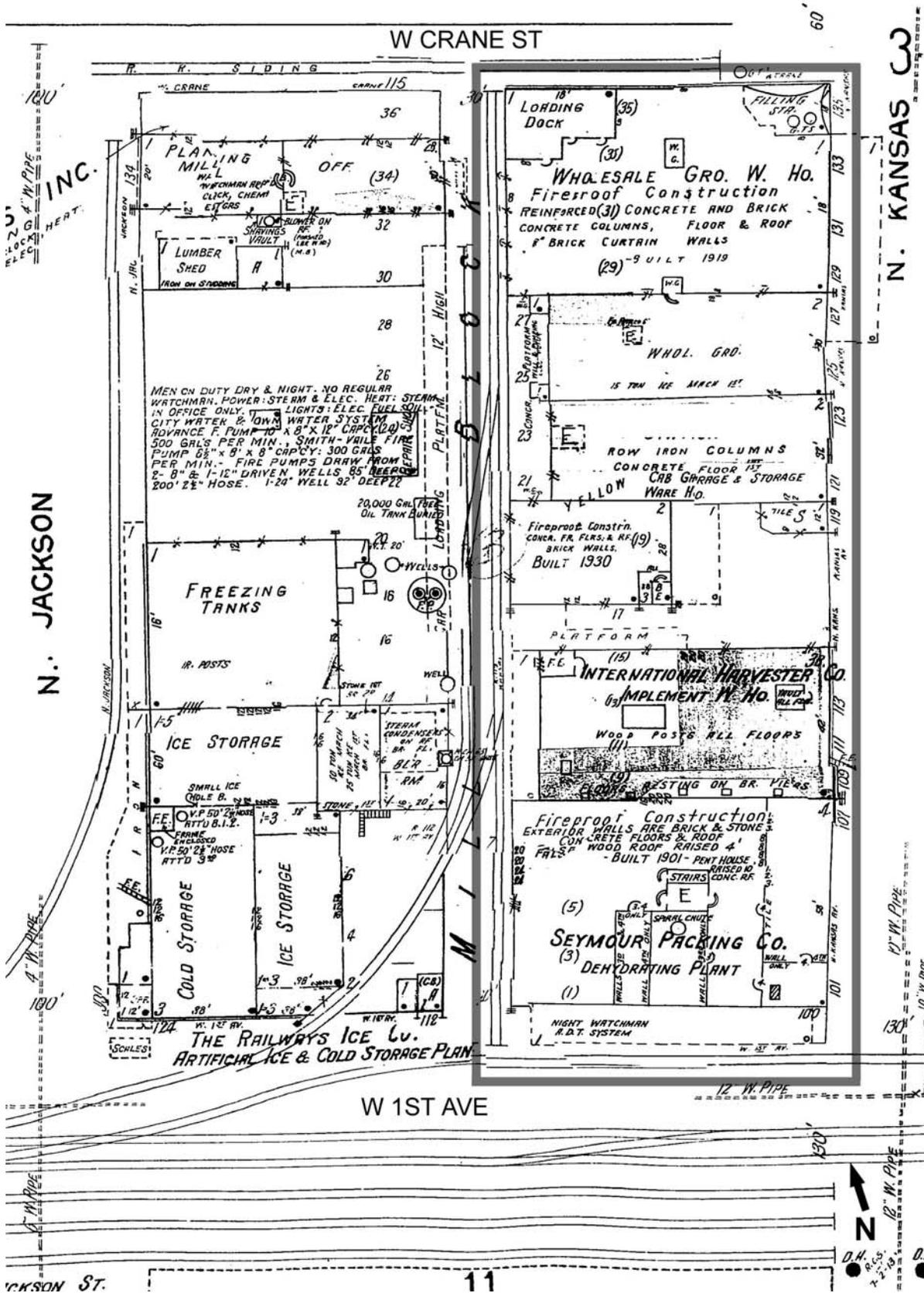
Figure 8: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913. Source: Mid-Continent Public Library, online database, 2014.



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 9: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950. Source: Mid-Continent Public Library, online database, 2014.



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

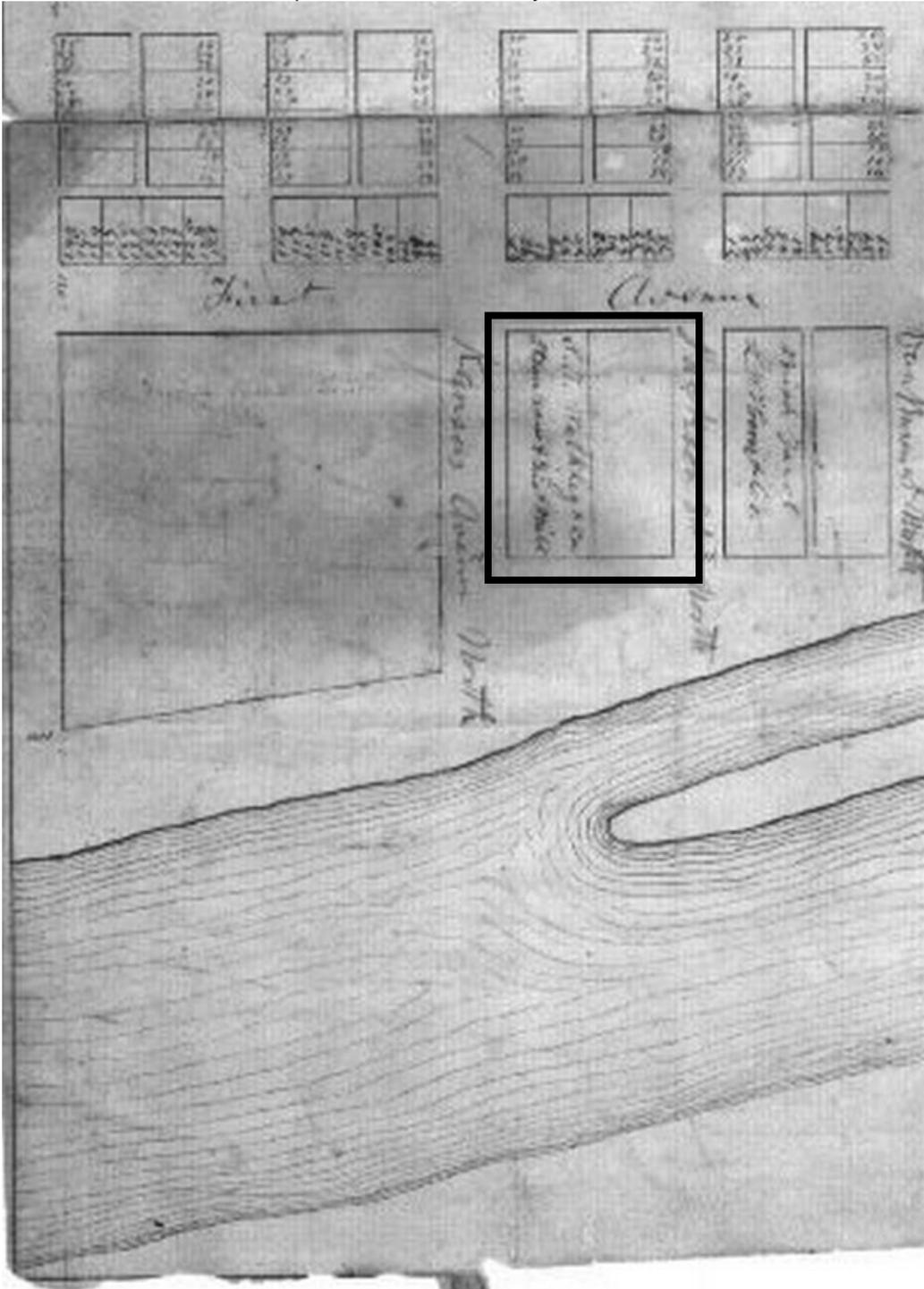
Figure 10: Detail of Cornerstone at 101 N Kansas Avenue. *Source: Brad Finch, f-stop photography, 2012.*



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

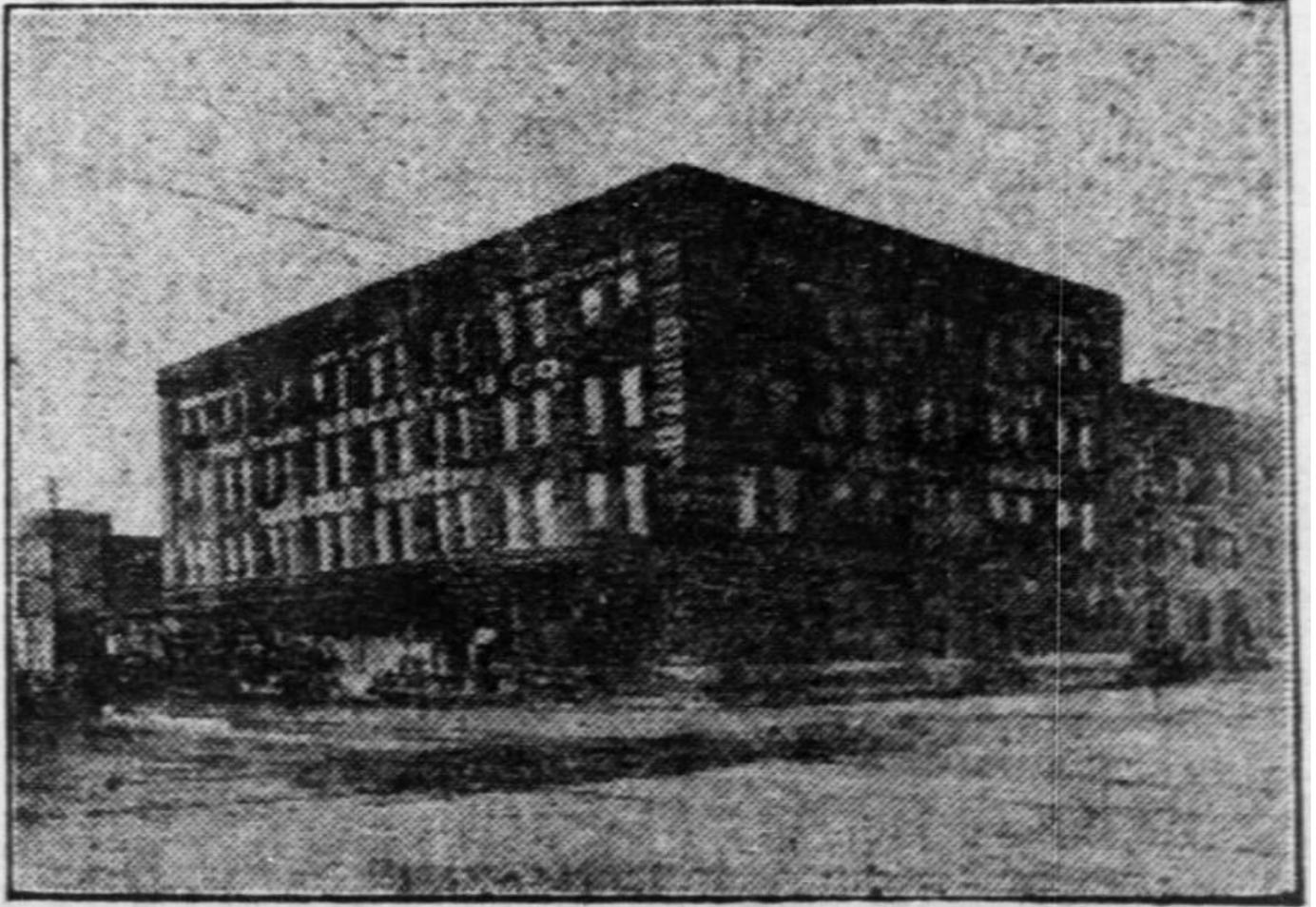
Figure 11. Plan for Topeka, c. 1855, detail of nominated block. Source: Item #90758, Franklin Loomis Crane Collection, #320 Box 1 Scrapbook, Kansas Memory online database.



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 12. 101 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1909. *Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory, Inventory #177-5400-01920.*



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 13. 109 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1955. *Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory, Inventory #177-5400-01922.*



Figure 14. 109 – 121 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, c. 1965. *Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory, Inventory #177-5400-01922.*



Mill Block Historic District
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 15. 125 N Kansas Avenue. Historic photograph, 1913. Source: "Capital Broom Works" advertisement, Topeka Daily Capital, November 29, 1913, page 13, Microfilm, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.



Figure 16. Aerial photograph, detail. 1957, Photo 22. Source: Item #209999, Kansas Department of Transportation, Kansas Memory online database.

