

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Keisker Building

Other names/site number: F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company Building, JFCD-325

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 315 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd.

City or town: Louisville State: Kentucky County: Jefferson

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 X 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: ___A ___B XC ___D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: Craig Potts, SHPO Date _____ _____ Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official: _____ Date _____</p>	
<p>_____ Title : _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

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

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Chicago

Materials:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Brick, Terra Cotta, Metal

Roof: Rolled Asphalt

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Keisker Building is a five-story commercial/office building constructed in 1909 in the style of the Chicago School of Architecture. The building is located at 315 West Muhammad Ali Boulevard, formerly Walnut Street, on the north side of the road, at the approximate halfway point in the block between Third and Fourth Streets in Downtown Louisville. The property proposed for listing is a 0.2-acre area, consisting of only the building itself. The Period of Significance is a single year, 1909, marking the year that the resource was built.

The Keisker Building is in a densely developed area, just south of the heart of Downtown Louisville. The area immediately surrounding the building consists of all manners of commercial activity, mostly dating to around the turn of the 20th century, at a time when this portion of the city was transforming as the city grew in population and size, but with some modern infill, such as the Omni Hotel, located just northeast on the east side of Third St. This portion of the W. Muhammad Ali Blvd. corridor in which it sits features a diverse collection of office buildings, hotels, commercial buildings, social halls, and entertainment facilities, making it a unique stretch of real estate in Downtown Louisville, both historically and presently. In its immediate vicinity, there are several other resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including: the Pendennis Club (NR #03001225), the Stewarts Dry Goods Company Building (NR #82002725), the Starks Building (NR #85001508), the Kaufman-Straus Building (NR #78001357), the Seelbach Hotel (NR #75000775), the Walnut Street Theatre (NR #78001370), and the Republic Building (NR #82002718).

General Setting of the Area

Downtown Louisville is generally bounded on the north by the Ohio River, in the west by 10th and 9th Streets, on the south by West Broadway, and on the east by South Preston Street and Interstate 65. Downtown Louisville, like the city center of any city of a similar size, is characterized by the presence of skyscrapers, densely packed buildings, and historic structures. It consists of a mix of commercial buildings, multi-family residential buildings, hotels, restaurants, recreational buildings, religious facilities and more. The layout and density of a lot of urban Louisville changed drastically after the mid-twentieth century as Urban Renewal efforts made way for interstate highways, larger local thoroughfares, surface parking lots, and new construction to accommodate the growing number of automobiles, increased mobilization, and the city's rapid suburbanization. This resulted in the destruction of a large portion of the City's built environment. Downtown Louisville was hit particularly hard during this time, in part due to the construction of Interstate 65, Interstate 64, and the widening of 9th Street. However, the destruction was not just limited to the corridors of roadway construction. Many blocks in Downtown Louisville were decimated and are now empty lots for parking or new construction. While there has been some infill in recent years, the effects of massive Urban Renewal efforts are still visible today.

The area directly surrounding the Keisker Building has changed some over the years. The most notable change came under the guise of Urban Renewal when Louisville's historic Black business and social corridor, which was situated just west of the Keisker Building along Walnut Street from 6th to 13th was wiped out, prompting some people to call it Urban Removal as opposed to Urban

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Renewal. This was seen as an attack on Black life and success in Louisville and to further segregate the city physically, if not legally. Urban Renewal also changed the landscape to the east as the Interstate 65 corridor is just one block away. To the north and south, the area has witnessed substantial development, especially in recent years with the construction of the Omni hotel and the transformation of Fourth Street Live, and in more distant history with the demolition of buildings to make way for parking lots and the construction of parking garages. However, functionality and usage of the area has more or less remained the same for the last century.

The development of this area of Downtown Louisville dates to the earliest expansion of the city, but it underwent significant changes around the turn of the century. It was during this time that Louisville underwent an economic growth which facilitated and necessitated the construction of larger commercial and hospitality buildings in place of small-scale commercial properties and dwellings. Around the turn of the century, Louisville experienced the commercial expansion, in which, the Keisker Building is located. The area around the building remains a cohesive late nineteenth and early twentieth century collection of architecturally significant buildings that also has a collective historical association with early twentieth century development and commercial expansion in Louisville.

Muhammad Ali Boulevard, formerly Walnut Street, has remained an important commercial thoroughfare in the City of Louisville for over a century and the two streets on either side of the city block in which the Keisker Building is located also remain important and busy thoroughfares today.

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Figure 1. Boundaries of the Keisker Building, as shown on an aerial map (Google Earth). Location within the City of Louisville can be seen in the insert corner callout.

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Narrative Description

Exterior

315 West Mohammed Ali Blvd is a five-story tall Chicago style building with a flat roof covered with rolled asphalt BUM roofing system, brick exterior cladding with decorative terra cotta and wrought iron motifs, set on a brick foundation (Photo 1). The building is connected to the Starks Building on its west elevation and 311 West Mohammad Ali Blvd on the east elevation. The south façade has three bays visible on the second through fifth stories. The first story is largely a replacement to the original store front with modern fixed paneled windows and an attached awning. The primary entrance to the building is under the awning in the building's center. Surrounding this replacement, however, is a decorative terra cotta block doric pilasters with a terra cotta block cornice. The pilasters are adorned with wrought iron detailing on its surface and at its top is a wrought iron decorative element, connecting the pilaster to the cornice. Additional wrought iron pieces remain on the cornice of the first story above the modern awning, indicating that the majority of these pieces have been removed.

The second through fourth stories of the building are defined by vertical terra cotta block sections. There are three vertical sections with two diamond reliefs each along with three sets of two metal one-over-one windows. The windows are separated by terra cotta muntin and set on a terra cotta block sill (Photo 2). The top part of each terra cotta block section is a decorative motif running halfway down the top set of windows. Separating the fourth story from the fifth story is an egg and dart cornice. The fifth story follows the terra cotta block sections of the second through fourth stories with each section containing two metal one-over-one windows with the terra cotta block inlay. At the top of the building is an elaborate cornice with two rows of dentils and Italianate styled brackets supporting the frieze (Photo 3).

The north elevation's brick is painted over and is a different color than on the south façade. The first story has a one-car aluminum garage door with an inset area covering the north elevation's primary entrance into the building. There is a one-over-one metal window on this story as well. The remaining four stories each have five one-over-one metal windows, each with a concrete sill (Photo 4). The brick in some areas around the first story around the garage door and insert is discolored, indicating that there was likely something else on this portion of the building; however, it has since been removed.

Interior

The interior of 315 West Mohammad Ali Blvd has two functions with the first floor as a business front and the second through fifth floors as designated commercial office space. There is also a basement; however, its current function is unknown. The first-floor business space is in line with the building's history as a furniture store, followed by a women's clothing and dress making store. The material makeup of the first floor has changed since its original construction. It currently has ceramic tile flooring or carpeted flooring covering a concrete sub-floor, gypsum drywall, and a drop ceiling with LRD lighting (Photo 5). The ceramic tile is found on the front half of the first floor while the back half of the first floor is carpeted. The back half of the first floor is office spaces (Photo 6). The restroom facility on the first floor is a modern installation with ceramic tile flooring,

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gypsum drywall, and a drop ceiling with LRD lighting (Photo 7). There is an elevator as well servable for the building (Photo 8)

The basement is accessible via a staircase along one side of the building's interior. The stairwell has vinyl floor tiles with modern baseboards along the perimeter, gypsum drywall that connects to raised ceilings of gypsum drywall. The stairs themselves are covered with a rubber tread surface and have wood handrails on each side of the wall (Photo 9). The basement has a large open space with the bottom half of doric columns as structural support pieces (Photo 10), a hallway connecting to a second smaller open space, also containing partial doric columns (Photo 11), a storage room, and a mechanical room. The material makeup of the basements two open rooms includes exposed concrete subfloors, gypsum drywall, and a drop ceiling with LRD lighting. The hallway has vinyl tiles and a rounded edge along a portion of the wall (Photo 12). The storage room has a concrete floor with gypsum drywall and ceiling with LRD lighting (Photo 13). The mechanical room has exposed brick walls and a raised ceiling, likely the original ceiling's height to the building (Photo 14).

The upper stories of the building are accessible via the same staircase that goes down to the basement (Photo 15). The layout, function, and design of the second through fifth floors is the same, largely used for commercial office space with side rooms off the main areas. The layout of the upper stories is composed of one large room with a hallway connecting to various smaller rooms off the main space (Photo 16). This main space has support columns evenly distributed across the floor and are covered with gypsum drywall. At their base is a rubber baseboard. The various side rooms include additional open space, restroom facilities, and a mechanical room (Photos 17-19). The materiality of the upper stories consists of replacement carpet in the main spaces and open rooms, ceramic tile in the restroom facilities, and vinyl tile in the mechanical room. The entire building is walled with gypsum drywall and has a drop ceiling. The third floor has a variation on this with a kitchen space. The kitchen space has vinyl plank flooring, gypsum drywall, and a drop ceiling (Photos 20 & 21). The ceiling in this room is dropped past the window height. In addition, the third floor has a large mechanical room and a storage room, each with vinyl tile, gypsum drywall, and a dropped ceiling (Photos 22 & 23). On each floor, there are sections of walling that are curved rather than at a 90-degree angle (Photos 24 & 25)

Changes to the Building Since the Period of Significance

The building has been altered some over the years since the Period of Significance, largely to accommodate new businesses and uses of the space. This is most readily identifiable in the replacement of the first-floor exterior commercial storefront with a more modern storefront with large picture windows and a nearly full-width awning. While the original awning and storefront is no longer intact, the surrounds and the associated support brackets all remain as they did when the building was constructed.

The interior of the building has also changed over the years. While the original use was a commercial furniture store, it is believed that all of the floors were mainly open space. One can expect that this remained the same throughout most of the mid-20th century, as the occupants of the building after the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company were retail clothing companies. In

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the latter 20th century, the building was rented to the Jefferson County Attorney's Child Support Division, which remained there until the 2020s.¹ To accommodate this tenant, interior walls were added as was modern flooring and acoustic drop ceilings.

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 grave
- D. A cemetery

¹ Louisville City Directories, Louisville, Kentucky 1880-1970; "DuRand Apparel Store Leased to Layne Bryant" *The Courier-Journal*. December 6, 1959.

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- 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
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1909

Significant Dates
1909

Significant Person
NA

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Architect/Builder
Hutchings, John Bacon (architect)

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Keisker Building (JFCD 325) meets National Register Criterion C and is significant in the area of Architecture. The Keisker Building's significance is evaluated within two historic contexts: "Chicago School of Architecture in Louisville: 1890-1920" and "Works of John Bacon Hutchings in Louisville." The Keisker Building is an excellent local example of the Chicago School of Architecture. The building's design helps us understand the evolution of commercial areas of Louisville. When it was constructed in 1909 downtown Louisville was already established as a dense, mixed-use, area with residential, manufacturing, and commercial buildings between the seven blocks that separated Main and Broadway. Within these blocks could be found many older buildings of much smaller scale. Development opportunity led the owners of these parcels to tear down the older buildings to make way for buildings, such as the Keisker Building, that could contribute to the increasing commerce in the city around the turn of the 20th century. Buildings with designs such as the Chicago School as seen on the Keisker Building signaled this commercial shift in Louisville, from its early nineteenth century version, where Walnut Street (renamed Muhammed Ali Boulevard), was a mix of lower-use residences and businesses, to the early 20th century, where Walnut Street became a place of more intensive retail operations, and places such as the Keisker Building reshaped the identity of the area as a setting for upscale retail commerce. The building is also the only known commercial building in Louisville constructed by renowned local architect, John Bacon Hutchings. Hutchings is thought of as a skillful designer, though primarily of large-scale, high-style residential architecture and the occasional municipal, education, and manufacturing building. His residential work is draped in revival style features, but this commercial building enabled Hutchings to explore a new aesthetic, one less dependent on applied decoration. The relatively simple exterior is important as an early instance of the movement in Louisville's commercial architecture, away from Victorian fussiness, to a cleaner and more efficient aesthetic, that of Modernism. These visual changes on Louisville's commercial landscape paralleled the rise of modern business practices, so that the architectural change helps us recognize shifts within commerce as well as society at large.

Chicago School of Architecture in Louisville: 1890-1920

The Chicago School of Architecture is the term given to the shifting styles that appeared in that city as it rebuilt from a devastating fire in 1871. The rebuilding campaign took decades, and the city became a place where architectural technology that allowed architects and engineers to test the limits of tall building design. The city became a virtual laboratory for the introduction of steel-framed building construction, relieving the masonry walls of their structural support duties. More than just the height, the buildings that came out of this school of thought were rectangular in shape, a necessity of the rudimentary steel-framed technology of the time, but they featured a more simplified architectural ornamentation than was typical of Victorian commercial design. The Chicago School designers often used muted classical detailing in conjunction with the verticality of the windows to create an aesthetically pleasing effect that did not depend on the detailing of revival styles, as Victorian design tended to.

The prominent architects of this era highlighted the verticality through fenestration while also incorporating decorative features such as intricate cornices and elaborate designs on the facades,

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largely made popular through the use of brick and terra cotta. The separation of the building into three parts was a visual tactic to draw upon the familiar vocabulary of classical composition, with the base consisting of the typical storefront on the ground floor, the shaft made up of the vertical bays of windows, and an ornate cornice capping the building. The buildings that emerged from this architectural proving ground projected to the early 20th century America a style of commercial construction that suggested a new modern age due to the buildings' steel frame technology, their soaring heights, their use by the country's large corporations, and the evolving aesthetic necessary to buildings growing vertically.

Louisville became a manufacturing and industrial center in the years following the Civil War because the city was largely unaffected by combat and was one terminus of the regionally important Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The city had already seen great success in manufacturing development through its location along the Ohio River, giving it favorable transportation opportunity. Factories in the city during this time grew from 436 in 1860 to over 2,300 by the turn of the century, while residents employed in manufacturing and industrial jobs grew from just shy of 7,400 in 1860 to over 31,000 in 1900.²

During the decades between the close of the Civil War and 1900, American cities grew rapidly through the expansion of industry and the massive influx of immigrants. From 1870 to 1900, almost 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States. Some of them claimed free land in the Midwest that was opened by Homestead Act, but many settled in urban areas from 1880 to 1900, when cities in the US grew by roughly 15 million people.³ Industry was expanding dramatically, as well, thanks to the large-scale mechanization occurring in America's factories. These factors drastically altered the way that cities in America developed in the late nineteenth century.

Throughout the City of Louisville, and other cities throughout late nineteenth century America, many entrepreneurs started production facilities; factories that were already in existence were expanded. In conjunction with this phenomenon, commercial entities were multiplying and expanding to meet the growing needs of the rising population. With ready employment, workers had income to spend in department and specialty stores and in hotels. Louisville's population increased in response to this prosperity. This, along with the ever-increasing ease of transportation spurred by the streetcar lines and the subsequent rise of the automobile, led to widespread suburbanization. As this happened, areas in the city center that previously contained smaller, single-and-multi-family residential properties, were transformed to accommodate large commercial buildings that, in some cases, dwarfed the commercial buildings in the City's core, in the original commercial hub. These new commercial buildings were considerable, not only in size,

² Yater, George, *Two Hundred Years at the Falls of The Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County* (Louisville: Filson Club, 1987), chaps. 9-10; Kleber, *Encyclopedia of Louisville*, xx-xxii; Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Manufacturers*, Part II, *States and Territories* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 281; Bureau of the Census, *Occupations at the Twelfth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 452.

³ Library of Congress, "City Life in Late 19th Century." Electronic Document, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/rise-of-industrial-america-1876-1900/city-life-in-late-19th-century/>; Library of Congress, "Immigration to the United States, 1851-1900." Electronic Document, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/rise-of-industrial-america-1876-1900/immigration-to-united-states-1851-1900/>

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but also in scope, offerings, and architectural grandeur. This era of physical growth in Louisville brought the influence of newer architectural styles, such as the Chicago School of Architecture.

Louisville witnessed this growth in the area just south of the city center, where the Keisker Building is located. In the early 1890s, the area of Walnut Street between Third and Sixth Streets was lined with two- and three-story mixed-use buildings, including single- and multi-family residential properties. The reimagining of this area came at a time when Chicago School design was available to give a face to its new identity. By the turn of the century, this corridor began to witness the construction of buildings rising five floors or more, particularly the commercial and hospitality facilities. These properties grew, not only in height, but in breadth. Smaller buildings were swapped for sprawling resources that encompassed the entirety of each parcel on which they were constructed, and in many cases, spanning several previously subdivided parcels. This transformation wholly altered the landscape along Walnut Street, in both function and in appearance, as spaces in-between buildings disappeared and setbacks became nonexistent, with many buildings running from the street to the rear alleys.

As the area south of the core of Downtown Louisville was transformed, it began to cater to Louisville's upper class. Newly constructed buildings were often large in size and were built in high-style architecture with decorative embellishments and ornamentation. While other styles, such as late-19th and early-20th-century Revival and American movements, such as Beaux Arts, Classical Revival, and Colonial Revival, line the historic street, it is the presence of the newer Chicago School of Architecture, including its offshoot, the Sullivanesque Style, that filled out the corridor and presented a cohesive street of upscale commerce through its architectural splendor.⁴

New entertainment and office facilities began to appear as well, bringing more people to the area for work, warehousing, and retail shopping. Similarly, people sought social clubs and outlets where they could socialize. As travel modes increased, especially for the affluent, upscale hotels became a necessity. By the end of the 1920s, the stretch of Walnut Street between Third and Sixth Streets had as many types of land uses as were found in the central city. Some notable retail stores included the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company, the Kaufman-Straus Company, and the Stewart Dry Goods Company. Luxury hotels included the Seelbach, the Kentucky, and the Henry Watterson Hotel, catering to upscale travelers. Large office buildings included the Republic Building and the Starks Building, with first-floor commercial space and vast office space in upper floors. Social functions were served by the Pendennis Club, the Odd Fellows' Liberty Hall, and the Business Women's Club, as well as the Walnut Theater, one of the new entertainment establishments.⁵ It was this focus on early 20th century abundance and greatness that prompted the

⁴ National Register of Historic Places, The Kaufman-Straus Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #78001357; National Register of Historic Places, The Pendennis Club, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #03001225; National Register of Historic Places, The Republic Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #82002718; National Register of Historic Places, The Seelbach Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #75000775; National Register of Historic Places, The Starks Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #85001508; National Register of Historic Places, The Stewarts Dry Goods Company Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #82002725; National Register of Historic Places, The Walnut Street Theater, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #78001370; National Register of Historic Places, Marmaduke Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #91000921.

⁵ Sanborn Map Company, 1892-1940; Louisville City Directories, Louisville, Kentucky 1880-1970.

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active construction of Chicago School of Architecture buildings. This style was representative of a new era of American construction, one of success, wealth, and grandiosity, and the corridor along Walnut Street personified this ethos.



View of the Republic Building and the Business Women's Club from the corner of Muhammad Ali and 5th Street, facing east.



View of the Seelbach Hotel at the corner of Muhammad Ali and 4th Street, facing east.

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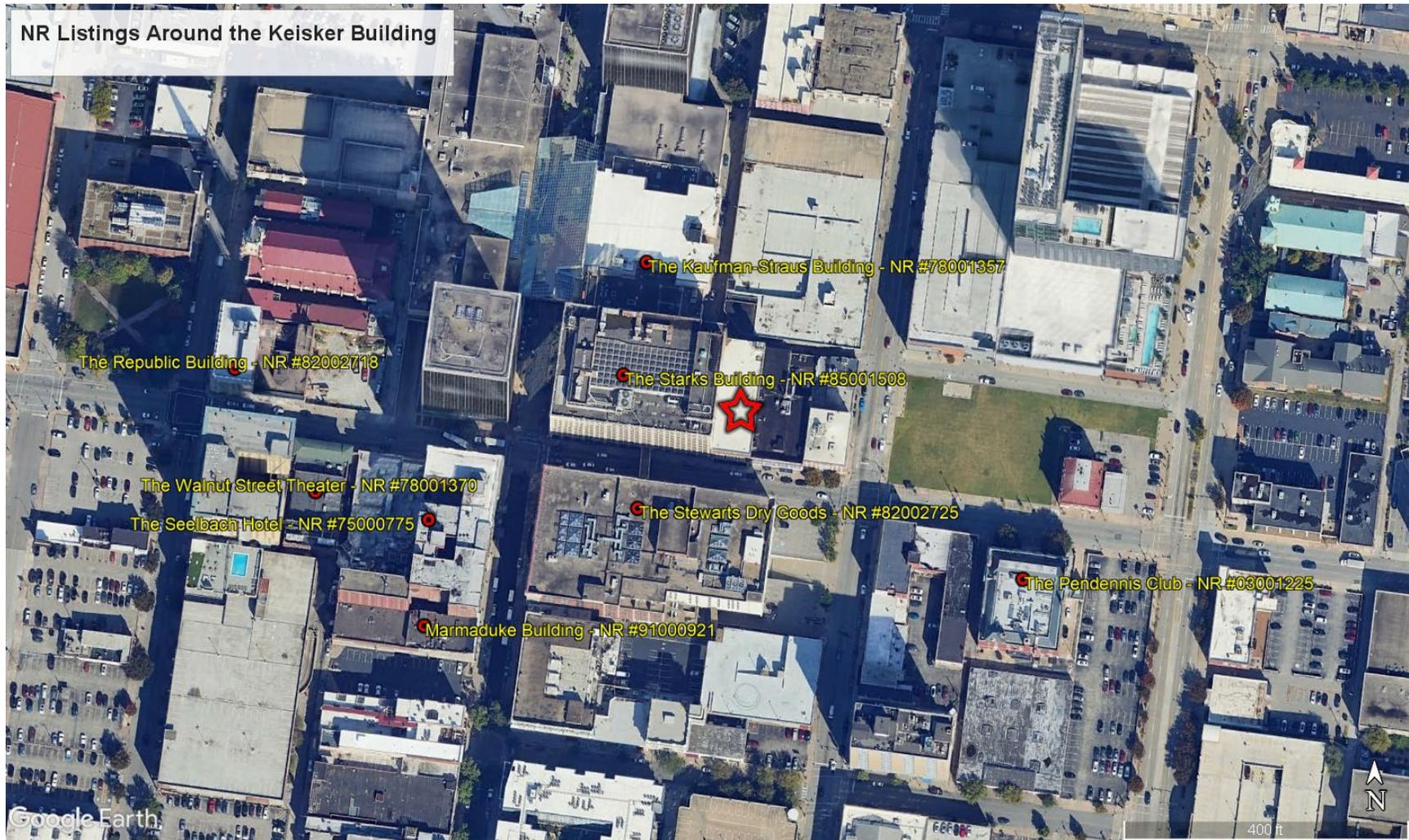
View of the Marmaduke Building and the Seelbach Hotel on the west side of 4th Street, just south of Muhammad Ali, facing north.



View of Stewart's Dry Goods on the east side of 4th Street, just south of Muhammad Ali, facing north.

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In Louisville, remnants of styles from the Chicago School of Architecture are present, but not frequent, though the extant, more notable examples, are situated along Walnut Street. The concentration of Chicago School buildings, particularly along Walnut Street between Third and Sixth Streets, indicates this corridor's economic strength during the era when this style was in vogue. The Kaufman-Straus Building, located just north of Muhammad Ali Boulevard, along Fourth Street, is a good example of the Sullivan-esque Style, an offshoot of the Chicago School that was developed as a way to make tall buildings more aesthetically desirable, particularly through the use of flowery imagery and organic themes. The Republic Building, at the northeast corner of Muhammad Ali and Fifth Street, and the Stewart's Dry Goods Company building at the southeast corner of Muhammad Ali and Fourth Street are key examples. They show how architects solved the challenge of designing buildings that would be seen at greater distances due to their height. One strategy was to emphasize window rhythms. The Marmaduke Building, just south of the Seelbach Hotel, is an excellent example of the tripartite window employed in Chicago School of Architecture buildings, most notably with the storefront on the first level, a shaft that emphasizes verticality through the repetitive windows, and a decorative cornice. These buildings' use of steel frames allowed a greater lightness in effect, by expanding the amount of glass on the exterior in relation to the amount of masonry. The Starks Building is an excellent example of the Chicago School built in the years immediately following the construction of the Keisker Building. The Starks Building is touted for its verticality and application of classical motifs.



The Kaufman-Straus Building, from the NRHP Listing



The Republic Building, camera facing northeast

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Starks Building, camera facing northeast.



Stewart's Dry Goods Building, camera facing southeast.

In the Keisker Building, the Chicago School of Architecture's style and form is readily apparent and among the exceptional examples within the City of Louisville. Not only was the Keisker Building constructed using the somewhat newly developed steel frame architecture popularized with the Chicago School, and necessary for building tall buildings, but it also utilized aesthetic features that were propagated during this period. The Keisker Building provides a competent instance of the Chicago School of Architecture in an effort to provide a worthwhile form to a commercial structure.

Works of John Bacon Hutchings in Louisville

John Bacon Hutchings was born in Louisville in 1857 to Eusebius Hutchings, a prominent financier, and his wife Elizabeth. Although he would become one of the finest architects in Louisville in his later years, it is unclear if he ever received any formal schooling or architectural training. In his late-30s, Hutchings was a vinegar salesman, but shortly after, he took on a construction project for renowned architect, Cass Gilbert, famous for such notable buildings as the United States Supreme Court Building, the Woolworth Building and several state capitols, which

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is where he gained his love for architecture.⁶ Hutchings is also reported to have received early guidance in the office of Arthur Smith, a notable Louisville architect known for his residential designs, some of which exhibited elements of Tudor and French styles.⁷

By 1890, Hutchings was working with another prominent Louisville architect, Cornelius Curtin, who designed the Columbia Building, which was the tallest building in Louisville at the time, and the Louisville City Hall Annex (NR #76000905), as the firm of Curtin and Hutchings.⁸

Beginning around 1897, Hutchings began to work independently until, in 1909, he brought his sons into the firm, John Jr. and Eusebius, and by 1914 they were operating as John Bacon Hutchings and Sons.⁹ John Bacon Hutchings continued to practice in Louisville, designing many noteworthy buildings in the region.

Hutchings designed many of his public buildings in the Beaux Arts style, perhaps an influence of Cass Gilbert on the young architect. Outside of Louisville, Hutchings is credited as the architect of the Woodford County Hospital in Versailles, the Kentucky Building for the Tennessee Centennial, and the Elks Building in Henderson¹⁰ In Louisville, he was primarily known for his work on high-style residential houses for Louisville's elite, some of the most magnificent in the city, including several houses in the Glenview Historic District (NR #83002673), including houses for Major Charles J.F. Allen, his son Judge Lafon Allen, and Charles T. Ballard, all on Glenview Ave, and many large-scale, high-style houses still extant in the Clifton and Cherokee Park neighborhoods, such as the Frank Fehr house on Lexington Road.¹¹

⁶ United States Census Bureau, *1880 United States Federal Census*, Washington, DC.; Stevens, Ashlie, "Legacy of Louisville's Early Architects Lives On In Its Neighborhoods." *Louisville Public Media*, August 26, 2017.

⁷ Kleber, 2000.

⁸ Ibid; National Register of Historic Places, The Louisville City Hall Complex, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #76000905. Louisville City Hall Annex is a Contributing resource to the NRHP-listed Louisville City Hall Complex,

⁹ Kleber 2000.

¹⁰ Kleber 2000; The Perry County, Indiana Courthouse is a Contributing resource to the NRHP-listed Cannelton Historic District, National Register of Historic Places, Cannelton Historic District, Perry County, Indiana, National Register #87000108

¹¹ Kleber, 2000; Stevens 2017; National Register of Historic Places, Glenview Historic District, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #83002673. The Charles J.F. Allen House, the Judge Lafon Allen House, and the C.T. Ballard Houses are Contributing resources to the NRHP-listed Glenview Historic District,. Major Allen was a Civil War Veteran and a prominent Louisville businessman who married into, and helped run, the Belknap Hardware Company. His house was the first constructed in Glenview and his sons all shortly followed.

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Figure 2. The C.T. Ballard House, also known as Bushy Park (Courtesy of Jefferson County PVA)



Figure 3. The Judge Allen House, also known as Glen Entry (Courtesy of Jefferson County PVA)¹²

Hutchings also designed corporate and municipal buildings, and was the architect of many manufacturing plants and warehouses throughout the region, such as the old Courier-Journal Building. Moreover, Hutchings designed the Perry County, Indiana Courthouse (NR #87000108), the Rogers Clark Ballard Memorial School (NR #83003697), and the Louisville Hook and Ladder Co. #5 firehouse (NR #64000227). Keisker's range as an architect is clearly demonstrated in the buildings that are still standing throughout the region, alternating from elaborate and eclectic residential houses to artfully, yet stylistically, ornamented commercial and municipal buildings. The Keisker Building is one of the few in Hutchings' impressive portfolio to showcase the Chicago School of Architecture, showing his range and willingness to deliver the new aesthetic to clients.

¹² Jefferson County Property Valuation Administrator (PVA), Online Property Details, Various.

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Figure 4. The Perry County, Indiana Courthouse (Courtesy of the Ball State University Digital Media Repository)¹³



Figure 5. The Rogers Clark Ballard Memorial School, now known as the Virginia Chance School (Courtesy of Homes.com)¹⁴

¹³ Ball State University Digital Media Repository, *Old Perry County, Indiana Courthouse, now the Perry County Museum* in the Chris Flook Indiana County Courthouse Photographs Collection.

<https://dmr.bsu.edu/digital/collection/FlkCrthsPht>.

¹⁴ Homes.com, electronic document, <https://www.homes.com/school/louisville-ky/virginia-chance-school/4dmd2b6v8vwb5/>, accessed August 2024.

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Figure 6. The Louisville Hook and Ladder Co. #5 Firehouse (Courtesy of Jefferson County PVA)¹⁵

Hutchings served as the Vice President of the West Kentucky Chapter of the Kentucky Society of Architects.¹⁶ He was the designer of the Louisville YWCA building, although he passed away in 1916, before the latter was constructed.¹⁷ His architectural legacy was carried on through his company, which survived a few years after his passing, and through his son, Eusebius, known as E.T., who went on to have a spectacular career as an architect, with many of his buildings getting listed in the NRHP.

John Bacon Hutchings' skill had an undeniable impact on Louisville's architectural landscape and the surrounding region. He proved to be a multi-faceted architect of buildings for Louisville's elite as well as for local municipalities. He was capable of designing in the revival styles that were popular at the time, designing buildings that were functional and aesthetically pleasing. The Keisker Building offers insight into just one more avenue in which Hutchings excelled. In this building, the only known extant commercial building designed by him, he was able to incorporate the Chicago School of Architecture's tall building structure and form, the associated tripartite design with decorative ornamentation, and the utilitarian style to create a functional and successful commercial building for Louisville's burgeoning new commercial era.

¹⁵ Jefferson County Property Valuation Administrator (PVA), Online Property Details, Various.

¹⁶ Letzler, Bergman, "The West Kentucky Chapter – A History." In *The Kentucky Architect*, September 1966.

¹⁷ Kleber, 2000; National Register of Historic Places, Rogers Clark Ballard Memorial School, Louisville, Kentucky, National Register #83003697.

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History of the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company and Keisker Building

The Company

The Keisker Furniture Company was first established in 1878 in Louisville by Fred W. Keisker, who had previously been a part of the Wramplemeler-Keisker Company.¹⁸ Keisker opened a small shop of his own on West Main Street and his business quickly flourished. By 1891, Fred W. Keisker brought his son into the business, Fred W. Keisker Jr. and renamed the company the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company.¹⁹ In 1900, Fred Sr. passed away, leaving the company to Fred Jr. who in turn brought his brother, Charles, into the company as a partner. By the early 1900s, the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company had opened a roughly 37,000 square foot store on Walnut St., just a block or two west of the location of the Keisker Building.²⁰ Fred W. Keisker Jr., who after his father passed was never noted in the record as a junior, was a successful businessman who had his hands in several prominent groups, such as being an officer, director, and president of the Louisville Convention and Publicity League, the president of the Louisville Commercial Club and Retail Merchants' Association, which at one point was said to be the largest business organization in America, and the president of the Southern Electrical and Industrial Exposition in Louisville.²¹ In approximately 1906, the brothers realized that they needed to expand their footprint in Louisville in order to allow the company to continue to grow, so the planning began for what would become the Keisker Building, and in 1909, it opened its doors with a huge celebration and a great deal of fanfare.²² The company continued to thrive in this location for nearly three decades, until in 1936 when they closed their doors.²³

The Building

The idea for the new building began around 1906 and the site for the new construction appears to have taken place shortly after, because as early as January 1907, the superintendent of the real estate department of Fidelity Trust Company indicated "that a new building will be erected on the site of the Catholic Woman's clubhouse, at 315 West Walnut Street."²⁴ The following year, it was announced that renowned architect, John Bacon Hutchings, was designing the plans that would be used for the new Keisker building.²⁵

¹⁸ "Keisker," *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky. October 3, 1909.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *The Furniture Journal*, the Trade Periodical Company, Chicago, Illinois, January 11, 1909.

²¹ Ibid; *Who's Who in Louisville*, the Louisville Press Club Publishers, Louisville, Kentucky 1912; Brown, Robert W. ed., *Book of Louisville and Kentucky: Edition 1915 With Pictures*, Louisville Convention and Publicity League, Louisville, KY 1915; *Electrical Review and Western Electrician*. Electrical Review Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1909.

²² "Keisker" 1909.

²³ Louisville City Directories, Louisville, Kentucky 1880-1970.

²⁴ *The Ohio Architect and Builder*. Vol 9, No. 1. Cleveland, Ohio, January 1907:79.

²⁵ *Manufacturers' Record: A Weekly Southern Industrial, Railroad, and Financial Newspaper*. Baltimore, Maryland, January 16, 1908.

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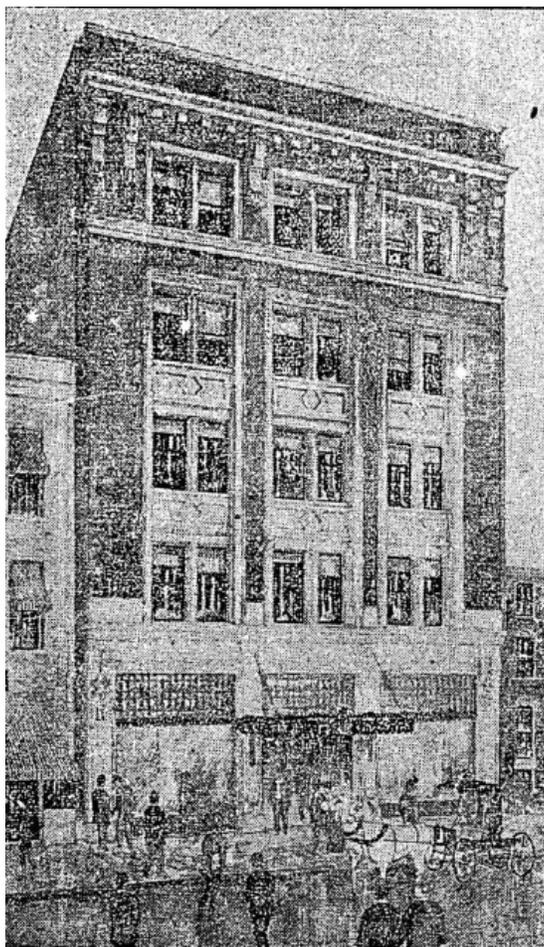


Figure 7. Image of the Keisker Building at the time of its opening.²⁶

When the building opened, it was a model of modern commercial construction, both in its stylistic architectural features, and in its lavish interior furnishings and offerings. The building boasted of upwards of 55,000 square feet of floor space, with a sprinkler system and steel construction that Keisker believed made his building “practically fire-proof.”²⁷ All five floors of the building were spacious and accessible to the customer, as they were all utilized for displaying furniture, rugs, light fixtures, and all manners of fine modern interior decoration of the time. One feature that was highlighted as an innovative element was the passenger elevator installed for ease of access to the upper levels for all patrons of the store. The one installed was “the latest device in use in the United States” at the time and included safety features, like not being able to operate while the door was open, and electric buttons that allowed the elevator to be operated by anyone and stop on any floor one chose.²⁸

²⁶ “Keisker” 1909.

²⁷ *The Furniture Journal* 1909:104.

²⁸ “Keisker” 1909.

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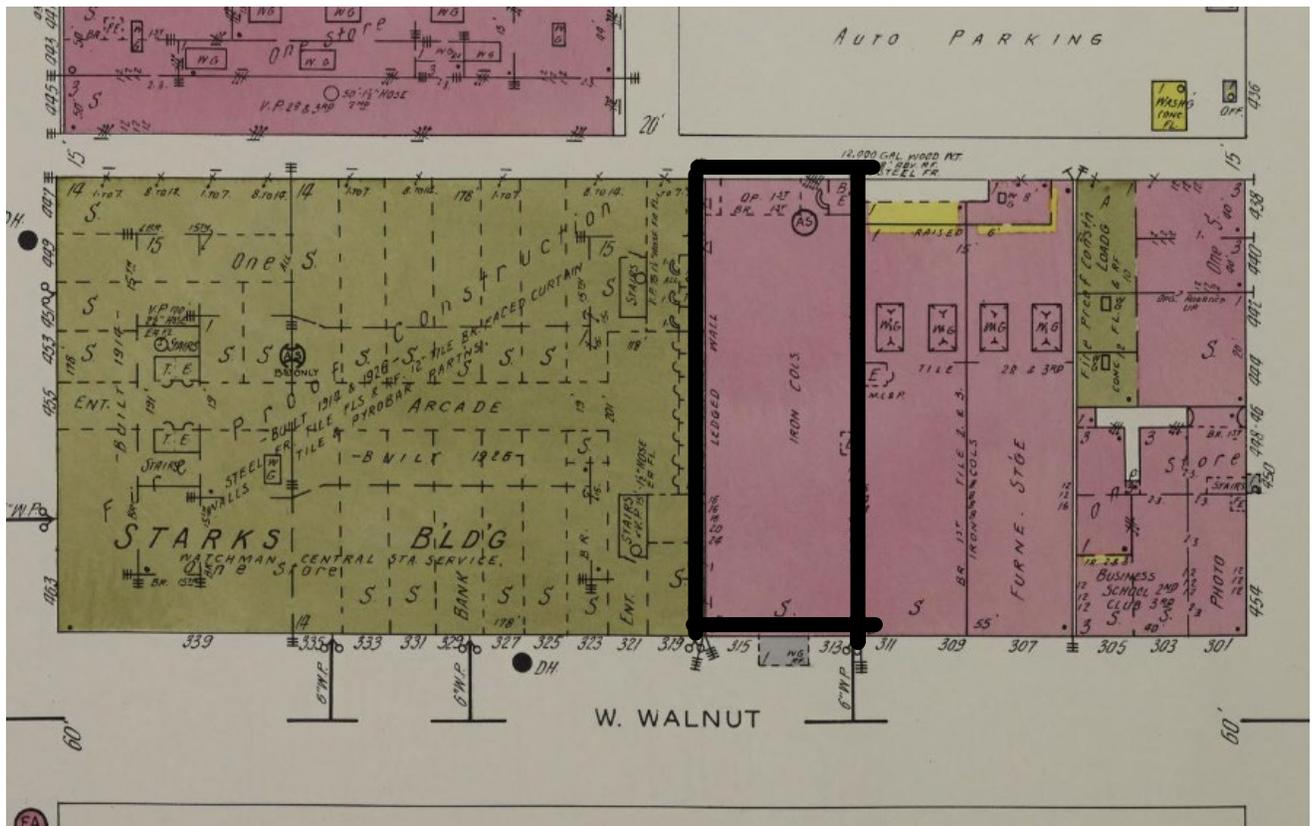


Figure 8. 1940 Sanborn Map showing the Keisker Building, 307-315 West Walnut.

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Figure 9. Photo of the Keisker Building from ca. 1930.²⁹

²⁹ Findling, John E. *Postcard History Series: Louisville*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina. 2009.

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The building was designed in the attractive, and somewhat new, style of the Chicago School of Architecture to attract the affluent clientele that the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company intended to serve. Its interior offered five floors of furniture and other interior decorations. This building was constructed with the intention of fulfilling the needs of this rising commercial and affluent hub in Downtown Louisville.

After the F.W. Keisker & Son Furniture Company vacated the building, it was used for a commercial clothing store, the DuRand Inc. Women's Clothing Company, until 1959. After that, the Layne Bryant Inc., a specialty retail store occupied it. In the late-20th century, the building was remodeled to accommodate the Jefferson County Attorney's Child Support Division, which remained a tenant until the 2020s.³⁰

Evaluation of the Significance of the Keisker Building under Criterion C

The Keisker Building is an excellent example of the Chicago School of Architecture in Louisville from the early years of the 20th century. The area in which the Keisker Building is located evolved and transformed around the turn of the 20th century to cater to Louisville's growing wealth and commercial success. Moreover, this particular portion of the Walnut Street (Muhammad Ali Blvd) corridor transitioned from a lower-use to a much higher-use zone, built up as a vibrant office and retail area with high-rise office buildings, affluent social halls, and upscale department stores. The Keisker Building is a good example of this design trend and still retains sufficient integrity denoting its architectural competence. This building demonstrates how the built environment can tell the story of Louisville's growth and economic success around the turn of the century, when Louisville was among the nation's leading cities.

The Chicago School of Architecture rose to prominence in an era when skyscrapers were being introduced to the nation's larger cities. The designers in this movement had to balance the use of advances in steel frame technology with the desire to make the tall building aesthetically pleasing. The Keisker Building is a good example of such architectural style and was built during a time when skyscrapers were beginning to dot the Louisville skyline.

Inspired by these architects' innovative concept of separating the tall building into three distinct parts, and designing each with their own adornments, the Keisker building provides an architectural solution that blended the traditional—a building with classical divisions—with the modern, in its steel-framed design. Its nod to modernity is also seen in its eschewing of flowery ornament. The Keisker Building contributes to the architectural conversation in this part of Louisville in the decade before the first World War, which saw unprecedented growth, and architects were exploring the appropriate methods of construction and decorative schemes to create distinct architectural forms, appropriate to their clients' needs and changing commercial patterns.

Additionally, the Keisker Building is significant as the work of locally renowned architect, John Bacon Hutchings. Hutchings was known for his work designing and constructing high-style residential buildings for Louisville's elite. This is demonstrated in various buildings still extant in

³⁰ Louisville City Directories, Louisville, Kentucky 1880-1970; "DuRand Apparel Store Leased to Layne Bryant" *The Courier-Journal*. December 6, 1959.

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Louisville today, primarily in the affluent neighborhoods, none more than the NRHP-listed Glenview Historic District, where Hutchings was the architect on at least two of the prominent houses, including the first to be built in the neighborhood. Hutchings' local success is also seen in his work on regional courthouses, schools, and even commercial buildings, some of which have been lost over the years. The Keisker Building, Hutchings' only known commercial building in Louisville, demonstrates his range and skill in the Louisville area, as being an architect able to complete an appropriate design for non-residential structure.

Evaluation of Integrity between the Significance of the Keisker Building and its Current Physical Condition

This building has been evaluated in terms of its overall relationship to the general integrity standards and its ability to convey the significance outlined above. The task of evaluating whether a building is potentially eligible for NRHP listing means first evaluating its significance according to at least one National Register eligibility criteria, and then, in this case, a criteria consideration, and then evaluating whether there is an integrity between that resource's physical condition and the sense of significance. That will call for ". . . sometimes a subjective judgment, . . . it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance."³¹ There are seven aspects of integrity as identified by NPS: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Association.³²

The Keisker Building is highly intact. Although the building has been altered over the years, primarily in the replacement of the storefront and the subdivision of the interior, each has been done to allow the building to meet changing needs as it transformed from a commercial retail space to office space. However, the key architectural features of the building remain present and the overall style, form, and appearance is still readily apparent. Moreover, the original building was largely open on the inside, as it was all used for display and retail space, and the subdivision of the space is all impermanent. A building which meets Criterion C and which possesses integrity of **Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association** will be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The property possesses integrity of **location**. This building has not been moved from its original site. The location is a key aspect to its significance, as this portion on the south end of Downtown Louisville, especially along Walnut St (Muhammad Ali Blvd) was transforming around the turn of the 20th century as Louisville's success expanded outward and the commercial landscape had to evolve to accommodate. Walnut Street, in particular, was a key commercial corridor in Louisville, and it catered to the city's affluent residents, thus the newly constructed buildings were built in such a manner as to exude wealth and success, which served to draw clientele and businesses.

The building possesses strong integrity of **setting**. The Keisker Building was constructed during a period of evolution along this stretch of Walnut Street. During this same period, several notable

³¹ United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin #15: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 2002.)

³² United States Department of the Interior. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1995) 46.

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buildings were constructed, many of which are already listed in the NRHP, that all brought a new era of commercialism, business, and hospitality to Louisville and its elites. Buildings such as the Kaufman-Straus Building, the Starks Building, the Stewart's Dry Goods Building, and the Selbach Hotel were all constructed within seven years and a block of the Keisker Building and they all remain today. This corridor as a whole remains largely unchanged, giving the Keisker Building an excellent sense of integrity.

The building also retains integrity of **materials**. Aside from the loss of the original storefront and awning, the building's exterior materials are largely unchanged. In fact, even the metal support brackets associated with the original awning remain above the modern one. Many of the architectural features that were indicative of the more ornamental Chicago style buildings, including the flourishing on the entry level and the intricate cornice remain as it was built.

The building possesses integrity of **design**. The Keisker Building's design is indicative of the Chicago Style, specifically as it relates to the ornamentation and the division of the façade into three distinct sections, a base with an entry level open to the public, a shaft with bands of windows and vertical piers, and a capital that features an extremely ornamental cornice. This style stressed the merging of the new era of tall buildings with the ornamentation of classical styles, thus the design is characteristic of the time period in which it existed, a time of growth and classical appreciation.

The building retains integrity of **workmanship**. The building is an excellent example of the Chicago School of Architecture in Louisville and the workmanship that remains on the building's façade, namely in the dentils, the cornice brackets, the terra cotta designs, and the metal embellishments show this indisputably.

The Keisker Building was constructed for a new era of Louisville commercial expansion in the city's downtown area and the building's appearance still reflects this purpose, giving it a strong integrity of **feeling**. While the building has not operated as the kind of commercial building for which it was constructed in the past few decades, the outward appearance and impermanent alterations to its interior are indicative of the original purpose. Moreover, because the building was built for an identifiable era of commercial growth in Downtown Louisville, and it still exists among many of the other prominent buildings from that era, many of which have not changed in purpose or function, and because the building retains integrity of location, materials, and design, the building conveys its historic integrity of **association**.

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National Register #83002673.

National Register of Historic Places, Historic Firehouses of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky,
National Register #64000227.

National Register of Historic Places, The Kaufman-Straus Building, Louisville, Kentucky,
National Register #78001357.

National Register of Historic Places, The Louisville City Hall Complex, Louisville,
Kentucky, National Register #76000905.

National Register of Historic Places, Marmaduke Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National
Register #91000921

National Register of Historic Places, The Pendennis Club, Louisville, Kentucky, National
Register #03001225.

National Register of Historic Places, The Republic Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National
Register #82002718.

National Register of Historic Places, Rogers Clark Ballard Memorial School, Louisville,
Kentucky, National Register #83003697.

National Register of Historic Places, The Seelbach Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, National
Register #75000775.

National Register of Historic Places, The Starks Building, Louisville, Kentucky, National
Register #85001508.

National Register of Historic Places, The Stewarts Dry Goods Company Building, Louisville,
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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 # _____
- 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: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): JFCD 325

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.2-acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 38.251361

Longitude: -85.756479

Verbal Boundary Description

(Taken from the building's deed, found in Jefferson County Deed Book 10657, page 299)

Beginning on the north side of Walnut Street (Muhammad Ali Blvd) 135 feet south of Third Street; thence west along the north said of Walnut Street (Muhammad Ali Blvd) 55 feet 10-inches to the east line of a strip of ground...;thence north with the east line of said strip of ground 160 feet to the south line of an alley (Post Office Alley); thence east with the south line of said alley 55 feet 11-3/4-inches to a point in said alley, said point being 135 feet west of Third Street as measured along the south line of said alley; thence south parallel with Third Street 160 feet to the point of beginning.³³

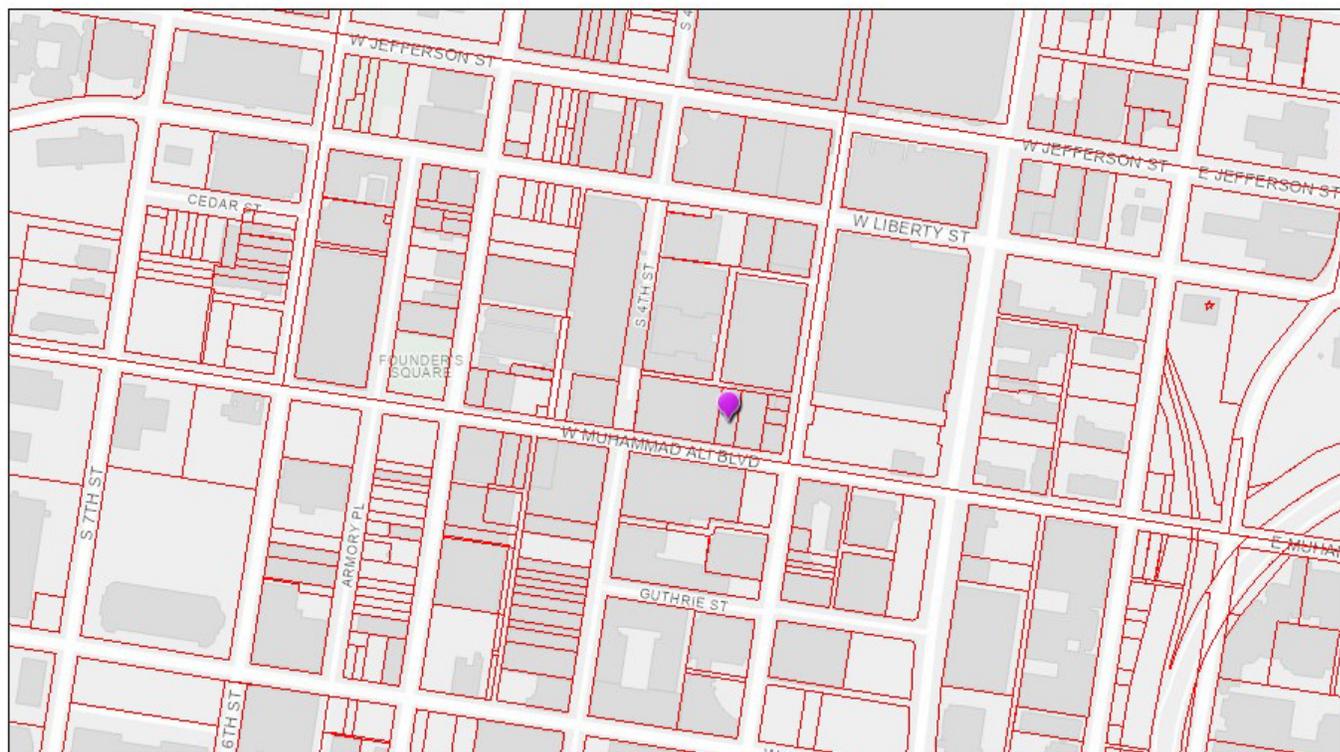
Boundary Justification

The boundary was selected to encompass the entire footprint of the Keisker Building and the entire parcel on which it sits, both historically and currently.

³³ Office of the Clerk of Jefferson County, Kentucky. Deed Book 10657, page 299, between Belknap Crossing LLC, Grantor, and 3154 Walnut LLC, Grantee, July 1, 2016.

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**Keisker Building - 315 W.
Muhammad Ali Blvd.**



Louisville Metro, MSD, LWC & PVA © 2024
This map is not a legal document and should only be used
for general reference and identification.

11/19/2024, 10:53:39 PM

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Wes Cunningham, MA, Sr. Principal Investigator History/Architecture, Director
of National Register Nominations & Research

organization: Pinion Advisors

street & number: 1131 Logan Street

city or town: Louisville state: Kentucky zip code: 40204

e-mail: wcunningham@pinionadvisors.com

telephone: 502-807-0575

date: August 2024

name/title: Michael Langmyer, MHP

organization: Architectural Historian

e-mail: langmyeer94@gmail.com

date: August 2024

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Additional Documentation

Photo Log

Name of Property: Keisker Building
City or Vicinity: Louisville
County: Jefferson
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Joe Pierson
Date Photographed: August 9, 2024

- 1 of 25, Keisker Building, camera facing north.
- 2 of 25, Keisker Building, detail of the shaft, camera facing north.
- 3 of 25, Keisker Building, detail of the capitol, camera facing north.
- 4 of 25, Keisker Building, camera facing southeast.
- 5 of 25, Interior, first floor, camera facing east.
- 6 of 25, Interior, first floor, camera facing west.
- 7 of 25, Interior, second floor bathroom, camera facing northeast.
- 8 of 25, Interior, second floor, camera facing southwest.
- 9 of 25, Interior, second floor stairway, camera facing west.
- 10 of 25, Interior, basement, camera facing southeast.
- 11 of 25, Interior, basement, camera facing east.
- 12 of 25, Interior, basement, camera facing west.
- 13 of 25, Interior, basement, camera facing north.
- 14 of 25, Interior, basement mechanical room, camera facing north.
- 15 of 25, Interior, second floor stairway, facing east.
- 16 of 25, Interior, second floor, camera facing southwest.
- 17 of 25, Interior, second floor front room, camera facing southwest.
- 18 of 25, Interior, third floor bathroom, camera facing north.
- 19 of 25, Interior, third floor mechanical room, camera facing south.
- 20 of 25, Interior, third floor rear open office area, camera facing west.
- 21 of 25, Interior, third floor rear open office area, camera facing east.
- 22 of 25, Interior, third floor utility room, camera facing south.
- 23 of 25, Interior, third floor storage room, camera facing east.
- 24 of 25, Interior, second floor open area filled with cubicles, camera facing north.
- 25 of 25, Interior, third floor elevator, camera facing east.

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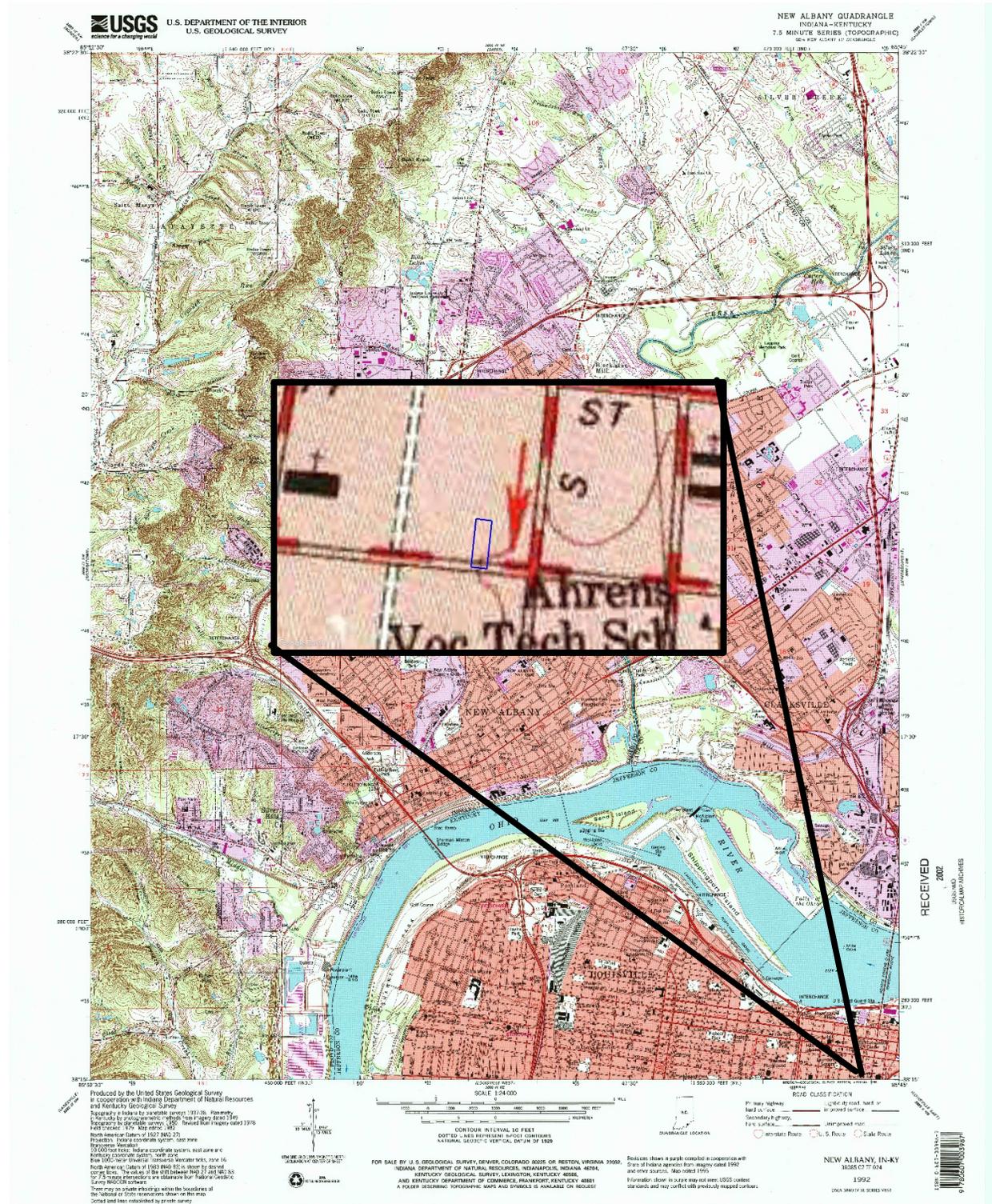
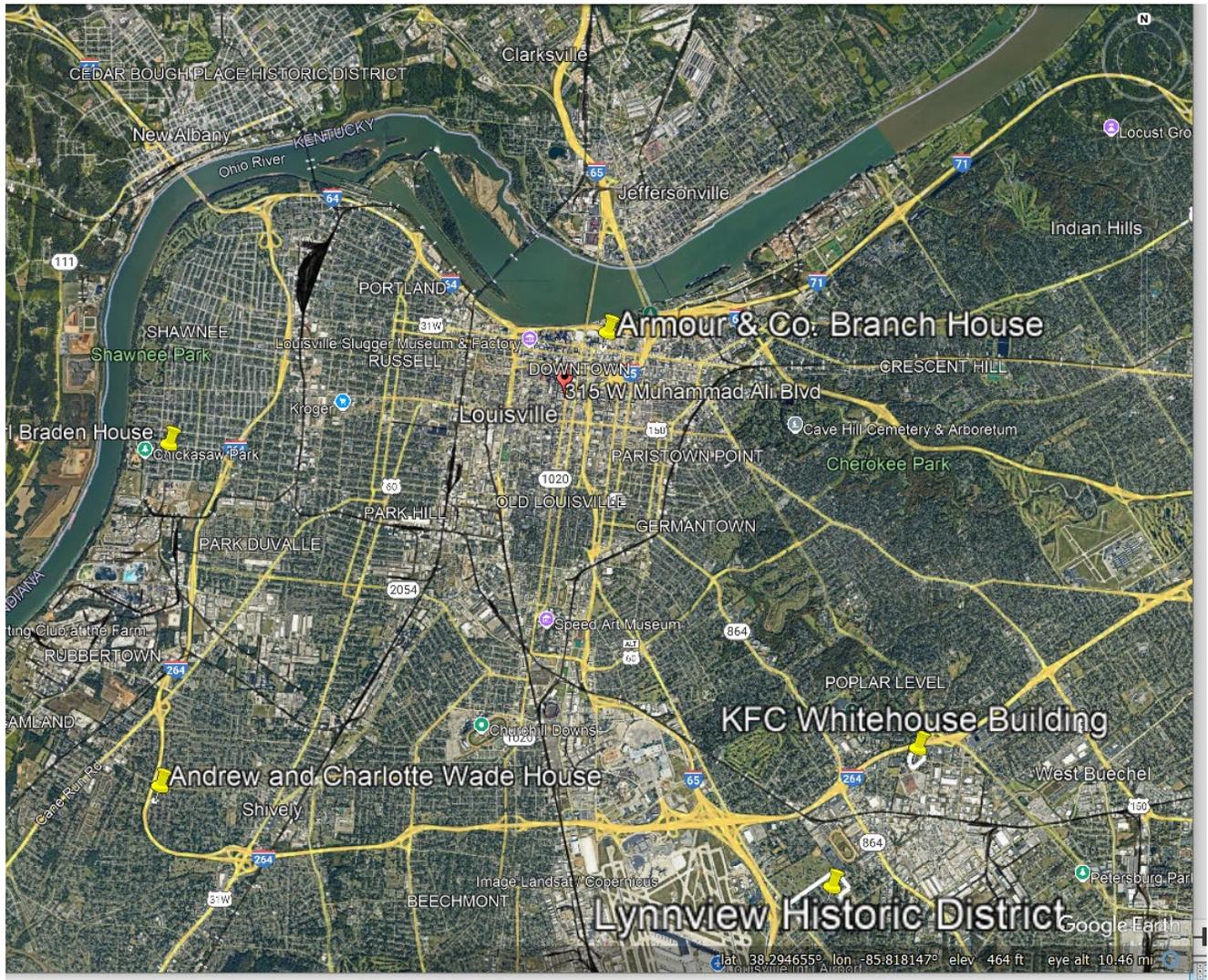


Figure 10. Location of the Keisker Building on a USGS 7.5-minute New Albany, IN Map

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Area map of Keisker Building courtesy of Google Earth. Property shown above as red teardrop and identified by address, “315 W. Muhammed Ali Blvd.” Location of other recent National Register submissions in the Louisville area are shown with yellow thumbtack icons, as reference.