NPS Form 10-900
OMB No. 10024-0018
(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Rock Fountain Court Historic District

other names/site number Melinda Court

2. Location

street & number 2400 West College St. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Springfield [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Greene code 077 zip code 65806

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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [x] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

LaVerne Brondel 2/19/03

Signature of certifying official/Title LaVerne Brondel/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[ ] entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet [ ].
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet [ ].
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5.Classification

Ownership of Property
[x] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
[ ] building(s)
[x] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Number of Resources Within Property

Contributing	Non-contributing	
10	1	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
11	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/Hotel

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Other: Ozark Rock Masonry

foundation Concrete
walls Stone
Brick
roof Asphalt
other Asbestos
Wood

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [x].

See continuation sheet [ ]

8.Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

[A] **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] **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
Property is:
[ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] **B** removed from its original location.

[ ] **C** a birthplace or grave.

[ ] **D** a cemetery.

[ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] **F** a commemorative property.

[ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1945-1952

Significant Dates

ca. 1945

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

MacCandless, Mac
Waddell, Ed

Narrative Statement of Significance

See continuation sheet [x].

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

See continuation sheet [x].

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
[ ] previously listed in the National Register
[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
#_____
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
#_____

Primary location of additional data:
[x] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[ ] Other:
Name of repository:

10.Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	471211	4117858			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debbie Sheals

organization Private Contractor date September, 2002

street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779

city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FOP for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Oleta Gunther

street & number 2400 West College St. telephone (No phone)

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65806

Summary: The Rock Fountain Court is located at 2400 W. College Street, in Springfield, Greene County Missouri. It opened ca. 1945, and remained in business as a tourist court well into the last half of the 20th century; it presently operates as a weekly rental property. The property contains a highly intact collection of resources, including 9 tourist cabins, a large frame garage, and a combination manager's residence/office. Of the 12 resources on the property, 11 are contributing. The cabins and office are arranged in a semi-circle, facing north to the road, and the garage is located in a back (southwest) corner of the lot. The cabins are of frame construction, with stone veneer on the most visible elevations. Each cabin has a slightly different type of masonry veneer, ranging from all dark sandstone, to white limestone accented with red brick. In most cases the masonry is limited to the facade and front porch, although the cabin closest to the road also has stone on the side and back walls as well. Each cabin has a gable roof with a large front cross-gable, and a recessed front porch; a few also have brick chimneys. The cabins are all highly intact, and all are contributing buildings. Most have their original doors and windows, and none of the masonry has seen any changes of note. The manager's residence has seen alterations and expansions over the years, and most exterior finishes on it appear to date to the 1970s or 80s; it is a non-contributing building. The garage has asbestos shingles on most of its walls, with stone veneer on the end which faces the street. It is roughly the same age as the cabins, and is a contributing building. There is also a low stone and brick boundary fence near the street which matches the masonry work of the cabins; it also is early, and a contributing resource. The Rock Fountain Court has seen very few changes over the years and is today the most intact tourist court on historic Route 66 in Springfield.

Elaboration: The Rock Fountain Court is located on a busy street in west central Springfield. It is approximately 3/4 of a mile due west of the Springfield Public Square. It is in an area which is largely residential in nature, with modest houses set on small lots. There are also a few other small tourist courts in the area, most of which maintain the residential scale of the neighborhood. The court property, which covers one fourth of a city block, measures roughly 200 feet by 200 feet. It is bounded by a narrow public alley along the back (south), by Forest Avenue on the east, and on the west by private property. The north, or front, edge of the property runs along College Avenue, which also became U. S. 66 in 1926. The properties facing College Avenue in that part of town contain a mixture of small scale commercial and residential buildings, most of which date to the first half of the twentieth century.

The cabins and manager's residence are arranged in a semi-circle around a hedge-trimmed grass courtyard. A paved road and a narrow sidewalk run between the cabins and the courtyard. The level courtyard is accented by mature shrubs and a central flagpole. (The central rock fountain for which the property was named has long-since disappeared.)

The cabins are numbered, starting with the unit closest to the road, in the northwest corner of the property and moving around the circle. (See Figure One, Site Plan.) That same numbering system is shown on a 1959 Sanborn map of the property, and it is assumed to be original. (See

Figure Two, Sanborn Map.) Although the cabins share general characteristics of form and finish, each is slightly different than its neighbors. Common characteristics include such things as general shape and size; things which vary include floorplan and masonry details.

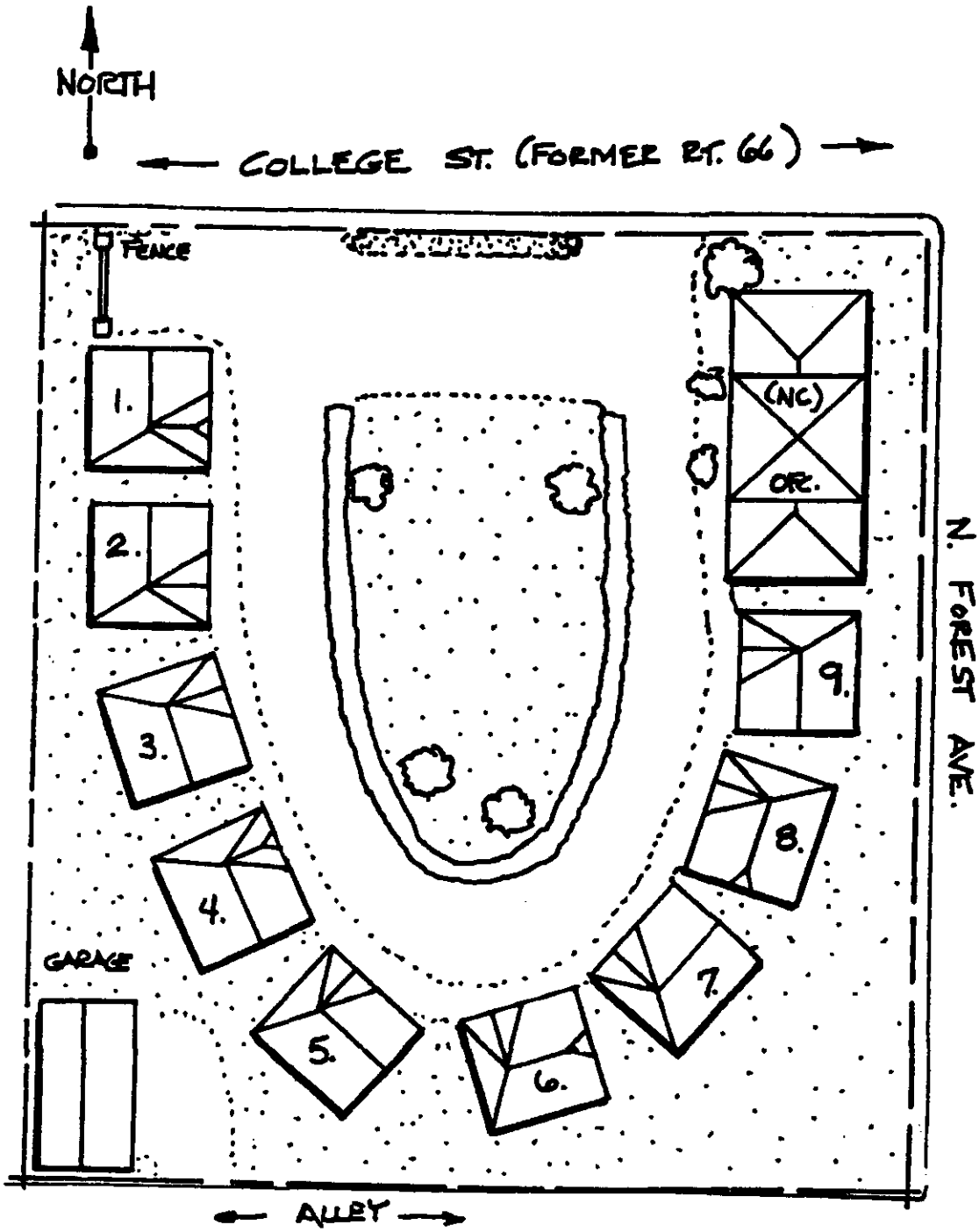
All of the cabins have rectangular footprints and fairly steep gable or clipped gable roofs with front cross gables; some of the front gables are also clipped. Each unit is approximately 30 feet wide and 25 feet deep. The back walls are all sheathed with asbestos shingles which are early or original. It appears that all of the units originally had back doors and one or two rear windows; most of those have been covered over, leaving only one or two rear windows intact per unit. Unless noted below, all have early or original wood windows, six-over-six on the facade and one-over-one elsewhere. The front windows all have solid wood shutters, and most of the woodwork in the complex is painted sky blue.

All of the cabins also have recessed porches, with two basic configurations. Some porches are slightly deeper than others, and have the entrance door in the wall which faces the street, while others are more shallow, with the doorway in the side wall of the porch. Those with a side entrance have a small sitting room, while those with a front entrance have a separate kitchen area with a smaller sitting room. All of the cabins have bathrooms with showers. Several also have exterior fireplaces, with brick mantels inside. Although each unit has at least some masonry veneer, the composition of the masonry work shows a good deal of variety, as seen by the individual descriptions below.

Cabin 1; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is the most visible from the road, a condition which is reflected by the fact that it has masonry veneer on the end wall facing the street, and on the back wall. The building faces east to the circle drive, with its north side wall close to the street. It has a side gable roof with a clipped gable on the front. The front and side openings for the porch are arched, and the front door faces the drive. The porch is on the right as you face the building. The wall of this unit which faces the road has a second large six-over-six window. That end wall also has a brick chimney, which is built of dark gold and deep brown bricks. The stonework features large irregular slabs of brown and buff sandstone, set into a dark mortar.

Cabin 2.; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is south of Cabin 1, and it too faces east to the circle drive. It has a gable roof with a matching front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the right as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the front door is located on the side wall of the porch. There is a small diamond shaped window on the front wall beneath the porch. The masonry is composed of smaller irregular slabs of pale gray limestone with red brick corner accents. The corner post for the porch is mostly brick, with small square limestone accent pieces.

Figure One. Site Plan. Drawn by Debbie Sheals. Not to scale.



Cabin 3; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is south of Cabin 2, and it too faces generally east. It has a gable roof with a matching front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the left as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the front wall of the porch. There is a small diamond shaped window on the front wall beneath the porch. There is a dark gold brick chimney on the north end of the building; it has dark red accent bricks along its lower corners. The masonry veneer consists of irregular slabs of smooth brown sandstone which are relatively uniform in color and tone. The corner post for the porch is stone, and the front window sill is of red brick.

Cabin 4; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is near the back of the semicircle of cabins, facing east-northeast. It has a gable roof with a clipped front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the left as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the front wall of the porch. There is a small diamond shaped window on the front wall next to the door. There is a dark gold brick chimney on the north end of the building; it has dark red accent bricks along its lower corners. The masonry veneer consists of irregular slabs of sandstone which have a wide range of colors and texture. Several of the stones have a rippled surface. The corner post for the porch is stone, and the front window sill is of red brick.

Cabin 5; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is near the back of the semicircle, facing north. It has a gable roof with a matching front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the left as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the front wall of the porch. There is a small diamond shaped window on the wall next to the door. The masonry is composed of small irregular pieces of pale gray limestone accented with red brick corner pieces. The corner post for the porch is mostly brick, with small irregularly shaped limestone accent pieces.

Cabin 6; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is at the back of the semicircle of cabins, facing north. It has a clipped gable roof with a front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the left as you face the building, and the front door is in the side wall beneath the porch. Unlike all of the other cabin porches in the court, the front opening for this porch is only very slightly arched, and it is topped with evenly shaped keystones. There is a small diamond shaped window on the front wall next to the door, and a red brick chimney on the east side wall. The stone used on this building is some of the darkest in the complex. It consists of irregular slabs of dark brown sandstone, with roughly squared corner stones and wide beaded joints. It is also the only cabin with a stone sill on the front window; the others

are all made of brick.

Cabin 7; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is near the back of the semicircle of cabins, facing west-northwest. The cabin has a gable roof and a front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers the facade and the recessed walls of the porch, and runs along the very base of the east wall. The porch is on the left as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the front wall of the porch. There is a small diamond shaped window on the side wall beneath the porch. The large front window in this cabin is modern; the new sash is the same size as the original and has a six-over-six configuration. The masonry veneer consists of rough slabs of sandstone and what appears to be limestone, all about the same medium brown color. The corner post for the porch is stone, and the front window sill is of red brick.

Cabin 8; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is on the east side of the semicircle of cabins, facing mostly west. It has a clipped gable roof with a regular front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the right as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the front wall beneath the porch. The masonry is composed of smaller irregular slabs of pale gray limestone with red and gold brick corner accents. The corner post for the porch is mostly brick, with small limestone accent pieces. The corner accents and the porch are both composed of alternating double rows of red and gold bricks. The front window sill contains alternating rows of red and gold bricks.

Cabin 9; ca. 1945, contributing building: This unit is on the east side of the circle of cabins, next to the owner's residence and office. It has a gable roof with a clipped front cross gable. The masonry veneer covers only the facade and the recessed walls of the porch. The porch is on the right as you face the building. The front opening for the porch is arched, and the entrance is located on the side wall of the porch. The masonry veneer consists of large irregular slabs of sandstone which have a wide range of colors and tones. Several of the stones have a rippled surface. The corner post for the porch is constructed of alternating bands of red brick and roughly squared blocks of buff colored stone; the brick bands are much narrower than those of stone. The arch above the front porch is lined with a row of red header bricks like those used on the post, and the front window sill is of the same red brick.

Office/residence; ca. 1945-1970s, non-contributing building: The office/residence is located opposite Cabin 1, close to the street, on the east side of the semi-circle. It is a two story tall building which has two single-story wings, one facing the cabins and one facing the road. The two-story section probably contains the original one-story office, judging from an early Sanborn map of the property. The exterior of the building today features mostly modern materials. The front section, which contains the office, has stone walls and storefront type windows. The walls on the back two-

thirds of the building are covered with wide weatherboards, and all of the walls are painted tan, with trim of the same blue color used on the cabins.

Garage; ca. 1945, contributing building. The large multi-car garage is located at the southwest corner of the property. It is shown on a 1956 Sanborn map of the property and appears to have been built at the same time as the cabins. It is a long, one-story frame structure, set with its gable end facing the street. Doors for the parking spaces are located on the east wall. The back wall of the garage faces the alley which runs along the back edge of the property. The gable end wall facing the road has a stone veneer which appears to be composed of stones left over from the cabin facades. The veneer on that wall is comprised of slightly smaller stones, along with some randomly placed bricks. The other walls of the building are sheathed with the same type of asbestos shingles found on the back walls of the cabins.

Boundary Fence; ca. 1945, contributing structure. This low structure is located along the western edge of the property, between Cabin 1 and the street. It is composed of two square brick posts set on either side of a low stone wall. The posts are about 18 inches square and roughly 2-1/2 feet tall. They are constructed of dark gold brick with red brick accents, and topped with poured concrete caps. Like the veneer of the garage, the wall between them appears to be made of leftover stone. the bottom courses are of brown sandstone and the top layers are of light gray limestone. ⌂

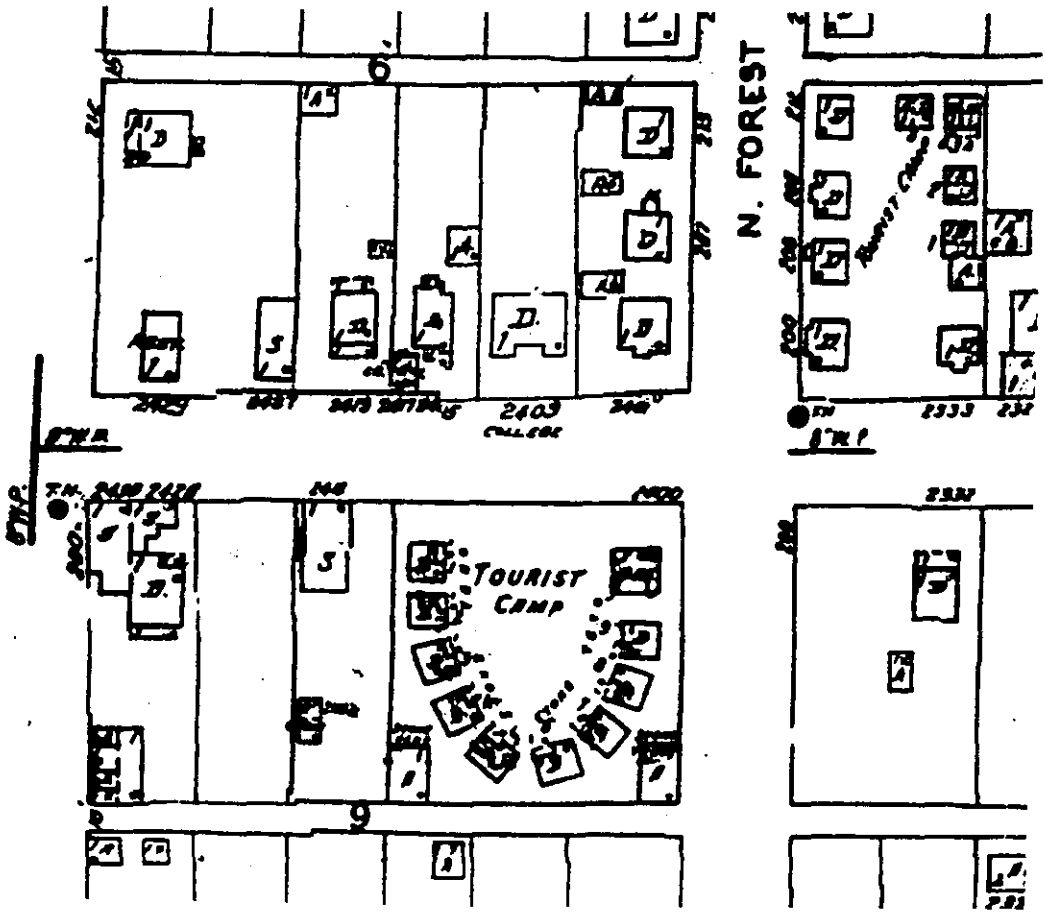


Figure Two. 1959 Sanborn Map of the block.

Summary: The Rock Fountain Court, at 2400 College Street, in Springfield, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A, in the area of Commerce, and under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture. It is a highly intact cottage court which appears today very much as it did when it opened for business in the mid-1940s. Of the 12 resources on the property, 11 are contributing. The court was built ca. 1945 by local developer "Mac" MacCandless, and the stonework was done by Ed Waddell, also of Springfield. The cottages were built to take advantage of the travel trade of U. S. Route 66, which was established in 1926. This is a relatively late, and notably intact, example of a roadside cottage court on Route 66 in Missouri. Although cottage courts were once the most common type of roadside lodging to be found along the nation's highways, their popularity was fading by the time the Rock Fountain opened, and many of those early courts have since been demolished or altered beyond recognition. A recent survey of all of the surviving resources on Route 66 in the state found that the Rock Fountain Court is one of the most intact examples of a native stone cottage court anywhere on that roadway in Missouri, and clearly the most intact such facility in Springfield.[1] The Rock Fountain Court is also significant as a good representative example of vernacular stone construction of the period. The cottages are all faced with split native stone, a material favored by Ozark craftsmen in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Although rock cabins were once quite common along the roadside, intact examples today are rare. The Rock Fountain Court operated in its original function for decades, and the cabins still serve as residential rentals today. The period of significance for the property thus runs from the time of construction of ca. 1945, to 1952, the arbitrary fifty year cut-off date.

Elaboration: Springfield is the seat of Greene County and the largest city in Southwest Missouri; it has served as a trade center of the Ozarks since it was established in the 1830s. The town was laid out around a public square, from which major roads radiate outward along the points of the compass. The road leading east from the square was platted as St. Louis Street, as it was part of a cross-state roadway which led to that city. The road on the west side of the square, which continued the westward path of the St. Louis to Springfield road, took the name of College Street. That road was probably named after Carlton College, a very early private college which was located a couple of blocks west of the square.[2]

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[1] See Becky L. Snider, PhD and Debbie Sheals, *Route 66 in Missouri: Survey Report*, (Columbia, MO: State Historic Preservation Office, 2002.) This nomination was written in association with that survey project, and general context on Route 66 and associated property types used here have been excerpted from the survey report.

[2] Shanna Boyle and Julie March, eds., Crossroads at the Spring, (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publishers, 1997) p. 48.

The public square served as the commercial and geographical center for the community until after the Civil War, when railroad service was introduced. That event was to have a divisive effect for many years, however, as the railroad came through the area a full mile north of the public square, spawning a second commercial center along those tracks. The town of North Springfield grew up around the new railroad center, and a sometimes bitter rivalry existed between the two towns for the next seventeen years. Finally, in 1887, Springfield and North Springfield merged.[3]

The railroad continued its prominent role in the area's economy until the early decades of the twentieth century, when the advent of the automobile gave rise to new developments. As one local history noted:

> During the first two decades after the turn of the century....the railroad continued in a dominant role providing both access to outside markets and employment for hundreds of citizens on the trains and in the machine shops. The completion of Highway 66 in 1926 gave Springfield a paved highway connection stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles and opened the way for tourism.[4]

With that tourism came ample opportunities for travel-related business, and tourist courts and other traveler services soon lined the path the new highway took through the city.

Route 66 came into the city from the east, and passed through the public square via St. Louis and College Streets before heading on west to Joplin. A bypass provided an alternate route to the north in 1935, although the earlier route continued in use into the 1960s.[5] While many of those early courts were built on the east side of town to catch travelers as soon as they entered, the area west of the square also saw related development. College Street still contains several Route 66 related resources, including five tourist courts which were built between ca. 1928 and ca. 1945. That group includes the Rock Fountain Court, which was built at 2400 College Street (less than a mile from the square) ca. 1945. The Rock Fountain is the newest, and one of the most intact, of that group.

Route 66 had similar effects upon communities throughout the state. It was part of the interstate highway system, which developed largely in response to the explosive growth in automobile use and ownership which occurred in the first decades of the 20th century. In the early 1890s, the first automobiles began to appear in cities across the United States and within twenty years, there were more than one million cars on the nation's roads. This exponential growth, combined with poor road conditions, fueled a nationwide movement to improve the country's road

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[3] Boyle and March, p. 26.

[4] Ibid, p. 30.

[5] Skip Curtis, Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, MO, (Springfield, MO: Curtis Enterprises, 2001) p. 67.

system. From that movement came two key pieces of federal legislation: the Federal Road Act of 1916, and the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921. Those two acts created the infrastructure and funding for the Federal Highway System. On November 26, 1926, U. S. Highway 66 was officially commissioned by the United States Secretary of Agriculture as part of the Federal-Aid Highway System. Route 66, as it is more commonly known, was the only interstate highway commissioned by that act to cut diagonally across the country, connecting two of the nation's most important cities, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The path Route 66 followed across Missouri is an ancient one which has been known by many names over the years. It was established centuries ago by Native American tribes as a hunting and trading route, known as the Osage Trail. As Missouri saw Anglo-European settlement and road construction in the early nineteenth century, this route became known as the St. Louis to Springfield Road. Later, during the Civil War, when telegraph poles were installed along the road, it became known as the Old Wire Road. In 1921, the Centennial Road Law was passed by the Missouri Legislature, to create a system of state highways, after which the route from St. Louis to Joplin was designated State Highway 14.

Just a few years later, Highway 14 became part of the Federal Highway System and was renamed U.S. Highway 66. Although Route 66 was commissioned in 1926, it was actually several years before travelers had access to a fully paved roadway. The highway in Missouri was not completely paved until 1931, and the paving of the entire route from Chicago to Los Angeles was not completed until 1938.

Springfield has many important connections to the creation and development of Route 66. It was there that the now-famous "double sixes" were chosen to identify the route, and it was also there that the national Route 66 Association was formed shortly after the Route was opened. The original designation for the Chicago to Los Angeles route was Highway 60, a number which was also desired rather passionately by the Governor of Kentucky, who wanted it for the highway which connected his state to the east coast. After sometimes heated wrangling, which lasted several months, influential supporters of the diagonal route met in Springfield and sent a telegram to the bureau of Public Roads to let them know they would accept 66 instead of 60. As a result, many consider Springfield to be the "birthplace of Route 66."[6]

Springfield was also the home of John T. Woodruff, a very influential area businessman who was an early supporter of Route 66 and the Good Roads movement in general. He is credited with playing an important role in getting 66 routed through Springfield. Woodruff was also the founding president of the Route 66 Association, which was established at a meeting in Springfield in late 1926 or early 1927. That organization immediately went to work on, in his words "an aggressive campaign to speed up construction, popularize the highway, and promote travel activity

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[6] Curtis, Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, MO, pp. 16-19.

of many kinds."[7]

As the shortest route from the Midwest to California, Route 66 soon became one of the country's most traveled highways. The number of cars registered nationwide continued to increase at a remarkable rate, from just over 1.2 million in 1913 to more than 19 million in 1925.[8] There were comparable jumps in Missouri, where vehicle registrations rose from just over 16,000 in 1911, to more than 750,000 in 1931, the year paving of Route 66 was completed in Missouri.[9] That growth in automobile ownership, paired with the availability of good roads, ushered in an era of individual mobility which had never before been possible.

Route 66 was also used extensively during World War II as a military road across the country for men, munitions and equipment. That function, ironically, led to its demise. Military use revealed a need for better roads for defense purposes, and led to the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944. That act created the National Interstate Highway System, which would eventually replace 66 in Missouri with Interstate 44. Funding limitations as a result of the war, however, prevented the interstate system from being constructed right away. Route 66 was given a reprieve for a few years, and the highway was used more than ever by tourists in the post-war years. It was during that post-war boom in tourism that the Rock Fountain Court opened in Springfield.

More than a decade after the new Interstate system was authorized, it was funded. Funding for the National Interstate Highway System was appropriated by Congress with the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, and construction on the new interstate began almost immediately in Missouri. Section by section, Route 66 was replaced with Interstate 44, and towns were bypassed. The last segment of Route 66 in use in Missouri was bypassed in 1980.

Although Route 66 was in existence for a relatively short time, it had an immense effect upon the state and the nation. As the first national highway linking Chicago and Los Angeles, it expanded travel options in a way the railroads had only touched upon. Millions of travelers experienced Missouri via Route 66, and the highway became an interstate conduit for business and income. As the State of Missouri Book reported in 1932 "The improvements of state highways has resulted in a very large increase in the number of tourists passing through the state. Estimates based on traffic counts made several years ago indicate that 5,000,000 visitors come to this state

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[7] John T. Woodruff, Reminiscences of an Ozarkian and Early Tourism Developments, 1941 (Reprint, Springfield: Southwest Missouri State University, 1994) p. 112.

[8] Frederic L. Paxson, "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935," The American Historical Review, 51, no. 2 (1946) p. 238.

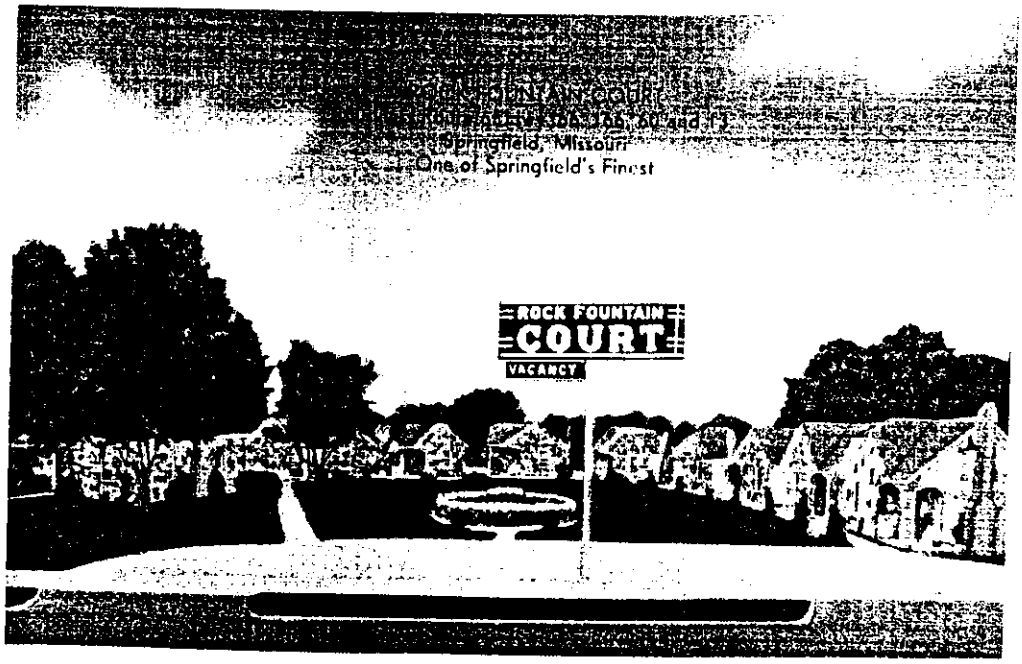
[9] Wilson Bell, Secretary of State, Official Manual of the State of Missouri (Jefferson City: Mid-State Printing Co., 1946) p. 827.

during the touring season."[10]

Proximity to the popular new highway provided local businesses with a ready-made clientele, and in many towns, the highway became an essential element of the local economy. This was especially important during the Great Depression, a time which actually saw an overall increase in volume for some roadside businesses. The cottage court industry, for example, increased more than 40% during the 1930s.[11] Route 66 connected dozens of small towns in Missouri with the rest of the nation, and the ever-expanding American love affair with the automobile ensured that the connection was here to stay.

A significant percentage of the highway inspired businesses of that time, were tourist courts like the Rock Fountain Court. Lodging facilities are, in fact, the most numerous of the surviving resources identified during the recent state survey of the roadway. They account for just under 36% of the entire survey group. Of those, the majority are tourist courts, which are also called cabin or cottage courts. Tourist courts are the most common type of historic travel related resource left on Route 66 today. They account for two thirds of all lodging businesses, and just under one fourth of all 66 related resources identified during that survey.

Figure Three. Early Postcard of the Rock Fountain Court. From The Missouri US 66 Tour Book, (Lake St. Louis: Curtis Enterprises, 1994) p. 201.



[10] H. R. Walmsley, ed., The State of Missouri, (Kansas City: Lewis Printing Co., 1932) p. 206.

[11] John Margolies, Home Away From Home: Motels in America, (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1995) pp. 32-36.

Most of those courts were locally owned and operated. Roadside lodging in the first half of the twentieth century was predominantly a "mom-and-pop" industry. More than 98% of all motels in the country were independent operations in 1948. That percentage dropped significantly about the time Route 66 was being phased out in Missouri, as national and regional franchise operations began to dominate the lodging industry.[12] The historic courts on the route today are, therefore, important reminders of the era of independent ownership in the roadside lodging business.

They are also representative examples of what were then very recent developments in the lodging industry. Although the modern hotel had been around for almost a century by the time the automobile was developed, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that full service roadside lodging facilities became common. Prior to the early 1800s, commercial lodging in America and Europe consisted mostly of inns which offered rooms and sometimes communal meals, all of which were of varying quality. It was not until around 1800 that the concept of combining overnight lodging with full housekeeping and dining services began to develop. The idea caught on quickly. One history of the industry noted that "it took 12,000 years for innkeepers to progress to the point of having 30 rooms under one roof. And in the next 100 years this jumped to 3,000 rooms." [13]

It has been noted in several historical accounts that the modern hotel industry is a North American invention. The full service Tremont Hotel, which opened in Boston in 1839, has been widely recognized to be the first hotel ever opened.[14] The Tremont pioneered a number of features associated with modern hotels. It was, for example, the first to offer washing facilities, including what was at that time a rare commodity, soap, in every room. The Tremont was instantly a hit, and soon imitated throughout America and Europe. Hotels became a standard feature in communities across the country, and were often regarded as objects of civic pride, with communities competing to have the biggest and best hotel of the day.

The locations of commercial lodging facilities have always been tied to transportation routes. The first known inns or taverns operated along trade routes thousands of years ago, and later, were located near stage lines in both America and Europe. The spread of railroad service had a profound effect upon the growth of the hotel business in America, especially in frontier situations. As one history put it, as "the railroads spread westward across the continent, new cities grew at junction points. With new cities came new chambers of commerce that realized the need for a grand hotel to

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[12] John A Jakle,. et al., The Motel in America, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 79 and 150.

[13] Henry End, Interiors Book of Hotels & Motor Hotels, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1963) p. 3.

[14] Arthur White, Palaces of the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1968) p. 129.

demonstrate enterprise and faith in the future."[15]

Those downtown hotels, which varied from upscale establishments to basic accommodations for traveling salesmen, did not quite meet the needs of the new breed of automobile traveler, however. Early automobile tourists, especially in the days of open cars and dirt roads, were not comfortable with the thought of traipsing through a downtown hotel lobby to secure lodging after a day on the road. Location was also an issue; the commercial center of town was usually inconvenient to the highway traveler, as it often required a trip through traffic and unfamiliar neighborhoods.

Another issue was the distance between communities large enough to have a downtown hotel. Traveling by car meant that one could stop for the night anywhere along the route that suited, but the problem was that there was often no where to stay when they did stop. As a result, many early travelers simply camped. As one history of the motel put it "They brought camping gear, found an attractive spot along the roadside at day's end, pitched a tent, lit a fire, and then slept in their own makeshift camp."[16]

By the time work began on Route 66, campgrounds for motorists, often called tourist camps, had become common features along many of the nation's roadways. Those camps were at first publicly owned and operated, and in most cases free, but as the need to charge for the services became apparent, the private sector took over the business. Tourist camp operators saw an opportunity in the making, and quickly expanded their offerings to include cabins as well as campsites.[17]

The concept of individual dwelling units which came complete with tiny kitchens and many of the comforts of home was enthusiastically greeted by the traveling public. By the mid-1920s, the cottage court was the lodging of choice for the automobile traveler in America. It has been estimated that the number of cottage courts in the nation doubled between 1920 and 1926, and by 1935, there were 9,848 tourist courts in the country. Growth in the industry continued throughout the Depression; the national total had risen another 39% by 1939, to 13,521.[18]

Route 66 in Missouri was no exception, almost all of the 1920s and 30s era lodging facilities found on the old route today are cottage courts, and lodging directories from the 1930s include numerous listings for "cottages." The Missouri listings in a directory put out in 1935, for example,

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[15] End, p. 5.

[16] Liebs, p. 170.

[17] John A Jakle,. et al., The Motel in America, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 33-36.

[18] John Margolies, Home Away From Home: Motels in America, (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1995) pp. 32-36.

shows that except in major cities, cottages greatly outnumbered hotels, especially in towns served by Route 66.[19] Hotels were completely absent from the listings for most of the smaller communities, many of which had two or three cottage courts. Early directories also show that the cost of cottage rental was usually about the same or slightly less than that of a hotel room, about $1.50 per night.

Since most of those cabins were built before the age of corporate standardization, they reflect vernacular building practices of their time. As one historian of the buildings on Route 66 wrote recently:

> Roadside architecture, particularly motor-court architecture, represent's the country's last blast of vernacular folk architecture based on regional and ethnic precedents....The builders' choices were regional. Proprietors in Illinois and Missouri turned to the white clapboard cabin set in a treed shaded courtyard. In the Ozarks west of Rolla, Missouri, and continuing to Shamrock, Texas, builders used local sandstones that reflected the colors of the land...[20]

The observation about the use of stone south and west of Rolla more so than in the eastern counties of the state is supported by survey data; only 11 of the 72 survey properties which have stone walls are east of the Rolla area.

The use of native stone for buildings in the Ozarks has been documented by other scholars as well, perhaps most notably via a two phase survey of native rock buildings in south central Missouri.[21] A passage from the Phase Two report of that survey shows that the stonework of the Rock Fountain Court is representative of "Ozark Rock" masonry:

> The golden age of Ozark Rock masonry architecture occurred in the 1930s and 1940s. During this period local builders learned and perfected the techniques of facing frame buildings with sandstone slabs arranged in interesting patterns. To create the slabs, craftsmen split sandstone along its natural fissures. Stonemasons often created

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[19] Conoco Travel Bureau, Conoco Travel Bureau Hotel and Cottage Camp Directory, (Conoco: USA, 1935) pp. 42-49.

[20] Quinta Scott, Along Route 66, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000) p. 12.

[21] Linda F. Becker and Cydney E. Millstein, *Ozark Native Rock Masonry Survey: Survey Report.* (Jefferson City: State Historic Preservation Office, 1992), and Bonnie Stepenoff, *Ozark Rock Masonry Architecture Survey Phase Two Survey Report.* (Jefferson City, MO: State Historic Preservation Office, 1993.)

polychromatic and textured surfaces by using a variety of slabbed rocks.[22]

That report also noted the common use of stone on tourism related buildings:

> Tourism is essential to the economic life of the Ozarks, and so it is not surprising that rock masonry architecture also appears in tourist cabins and motels...Entrepreneurs built many tourist structures along major highways during the 1930s and 1940s.[23]

The same survey report establishes a likely source for the sandstone used on the Rock Fountain Court buildings. The report includes a transcript of an interview with Floyd Lansdown, a third generation stone mason who's father opened the first commercial stone quarry in Douglas County, in the mid 1940s. Excerpts from the interview show that much of the stone used in Springfield during that period, possibly including that used at the Rock Fountain Court, came from his family's quarry. He recalled that the quarry shipped a lot of stone to Springfield in the 1940s, and that the business was still strong when he started working in 1951.

> Springfield was our main source where we sold it.....It was going good then. Motels. Trail's End Motel in Springfield, I think it's still there. Then along the old highway, what used to be Route 66, there's still a lot scattered in that part of the country.[24]

The Trail's End Motor Court, which survives in Springfield today, with some alterations, was built ca. 1948 by the same developer and stone mason who created the Rock Fountain Court. It seems likely, therefore, that the stone for the Rock Fountain came from the Landsdown quarry as well.

The Rock Fountain was built by developer Mac MacCandless, who apparently worked quite a bit with stone mason Ed Waddell. They have been credited with several private homes in Springfield and Lebanon, Missouri, along with at least three tourist courts in Springfield, including the Rock Fountain.[25] All three of those Springfield courts have, or had, cabins similar to those at the Rock Fountain in plan and style of native stone veneer. Those were the Rock Fountain (ca. 1945), The Trail's End, (ca. 1948) which is located at 1720 East Kearney, and the Rock Village, (ca. 1947) at

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[22] Stepenoff, p. 12.

[23] Stepenoff, p. 15.

[24] Bonnie Stepenoff, pp. 48 and 53.

[25] Scott, pp. 90-91.

2355 Glenstone, which has been extensively remodeled and now serves as a Solar Inn.[26]

A comparison of the cabins of the Trail's End and the Rock Fountain to an historic photo of the Rock Village show a striking similarity in the forms of the cabins. Each have, or had, the same distinctive front cross gables and recessed porches. They all also had similar stonework. The Rock Fountain, which is the earliest of the three, differed from the other two in the variety of stoneworking techniques used on the individual units. The cabins of the other two properties all have uniform stone finishes, with little to no variation from unit to unit.

The quality of the stonework on tourist related buildings in Springfield, especially those done by Waddell, was praised by historian Quinta Scott, in Along Route 66. She recently wrote that

> In Springfield the use of Ozark sandstone reached a crescendo. One after another, motels and cafes were built using the flat slabs laid up in the giraffelike pattern. West of Springfield clear to Shamrock, Texas, roadside entrepreneurs used stone veneers on their garages, cafes and motels, but never with the skill and elegance found in the Springfield model.[27]

Figure Four. Early Postcard of the Rock Village Court. From Birthplace of Route 66: Springfield, MO, (Springfield, MO: Curtis Enterprises, 2001) p. 93.

[26] Curtis, Birthplace of Route 66, p. 93, and 159.

[27] Scott, p. 90.

Considering the inherent durability of stone construction, even if only used as a veneer; it is surprising that so few early stone cottage courts on Route 66 remain intact and in good condition. There are less than six historic cottage courts of any type on Route 66 today which scored well on both integrity and physical condition ratings in the recent Route 66 survey, and only three of those have stone walls.[28] Ironically, one of the others, Mack's Court, is across the street from the Rock Fountain Court. Mack's Court is actually faced with pre-cast stone (possibly supplied by Landsdown as well). The third example is found in Cuba, Missouri, at what is now called the Wagon Wheel Motel. That property features small multi-unit buildings which utilize Tudor Revival styling, and a more formal style of stonework than the "Ozark Rock" found in the southwest part of the state. The Rock Fountain Court is, therefore, one of the most intact Ozark Rock cottage courts left on Route 66 in Missouri today.

One reason for the scarcity of intact historic courts can be traced to changes which took place in the roadside lodging industry after WWII. As demand continued and the industry matured, operators began combining units into larger buildings for the sake of efficiency. This was done either as part of a remodeling project, or, in the case of later buildings, as an original design element. It was during this period that the cabins of many early courts were linked together under single roofs, often with new units built into the former spaces between them. The term "motel" became popular for those establishments which had larger, multi-unit buildings. By mid-century, the "motel" had become firmly established as the modern form for roadside lodging.

It should also be noted that in some cases, the owners left their cabins intact and simply changed the name to include the words "motor court" or "motel," allowing them to cash in on the modern terminology without spending extra money to add units. Many of the Route 66 motels identified during the survey, for example, began life as cottage courts and later evolved into motels, in name and usually form as well.

Although auto tourism saw a sharp drop off during WWII, the post-war years more than made up for lost time. Those operators who had managed to hold on through the slow war years were rewarded with the largest client base yet. One source estimates that by 1956, there were approximately 60,000 motels and tourist courts in the country.[29] Ownership profiles within the industry had not seen many changes to that point; the majority of those operations were still mom-and-pop businesses, locally owned and operated.

The Rock Fountain Court was no exception to that rule; it was operated by people who lived on the property for much of its early history. City Directory listings show that it was home to Carl A. and Pauline B. Logan in 1946, and to Rex G. Wilson from around 1948 into the mid 1950s. Rex

[28] Survey properties were rated on four point scales for integrity and condition; only 12 were rated as "little changed" and in "excellent" or "good" condition.

[29] Liebs, p. 183.

Wilson was living there with Lowell Wilson in 1948, and by 1955 was sharing the manager's resdience with his wife, Mary M. Wilson. The family-friendly connection continued into the 1960s; Sherman Nutt bought the property in 1961 and renamed it the Melinda Court, in honor of his daughter. It is still known as the Melinda Court Apartments, and is the current home of Ms. Oleta Gunther, who owns the property and manages the rental business.

The pattern of individual ownership on courts and motels began to change in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as large corporations took notice of the ever-growing market. Large corporations moved in to the business, and began building new, larger buildings, with more rooms per operation. The long low profiles of the motor courts and early motels gave way to larger, often multi-story buildings, many of which utilized standardized designs. By the 1960s and 1970s, roadside lodging had largely lost its local touch. Mom and Pop had retired, and many of the modest vernacular buildings which defined the early motor courts had fallen from use or been replaced.

For many of the owners of the courts and motels of Route 66, that change had come about earlier, however. Decommissioning of the old route, combined with the construction of Interstate 44, meant that almost overnight, drive-by traffic dropped to a trickle. They were not alone; countless roadside businesses across the country suffered similarly. As Chester Liebs put it:

> Probably the greatest threat to the industry....was the specter of being bypassed. Motel owners about to be commercially marooned by road realignments, or even worse, new limited access superhighways, had relatively few options....For some, especially in isolated areas, the only choice was abandonment. As a result, to this day ghost motor courts, with their eerie gatherings of tumbledown cabins, are still a relatively common vision through the windshield. [30]

Route 66 in Missouri has its share of "ghost motor courts", as well as many former courts and motels which have found new life serving different functions. The Rock Fountain Court's urban location no doubt played a role in its continued existence, and current good condition. It did see a slight change of function, from overnight to weekly and monthly rentals, but overall is very close to what it was in the 1940s. That is something that cannot be said of many tourist courts on Route 66 in Missouri today. The Rock Fountain Court is important as one of very few intact and operational cottage courts left on Route 66 in Missouri today. As one of the most intact natural stone cottage courts known to exist on Route 66 in Missouri, it is also important as a representative example of Ozark Rock construction which strongly evokes its period of significance. ⌂

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[30] Liebs, p. 184.

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Verbal Boundary Description

All of lots 167, 168, and 169, of the Forest Hill Addition to Springfield, as filed with the Green County Assessor's Office for the property at 2400 West College Street.

Boundary Justification

The current boundaries encompass all of the land associated with the Rock Fountain Court, current and historically.

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

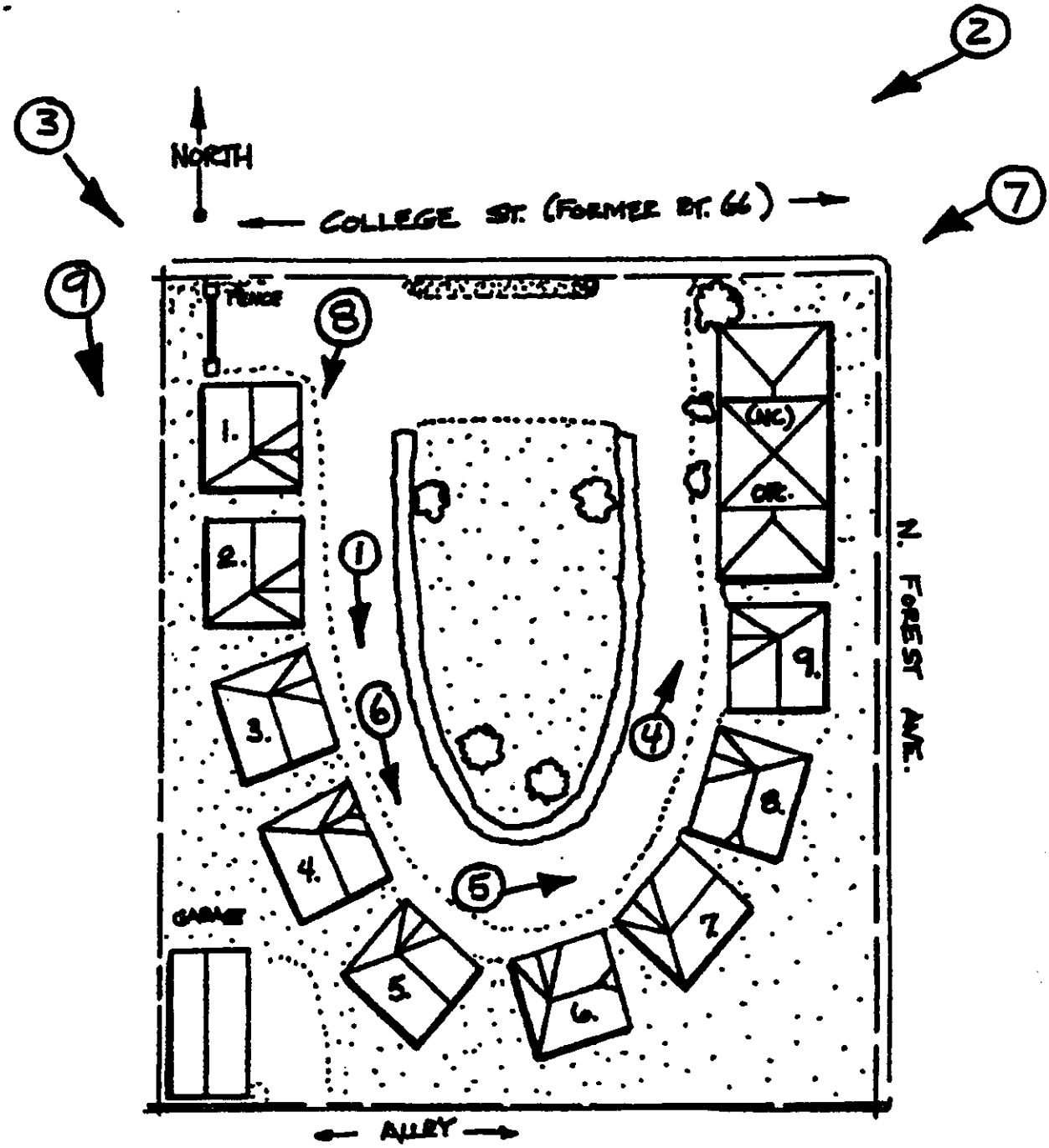
Rock Fountain Court
2400 West College Street, Springfield
Greene County, MO
Debbie Sheals
July, 2002
Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory, MO Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City.

List of Photographs

See Site plan for description of camera angle.

1. Cabins 3-5, looking south.
2. Street view, looking southwest.
3. Street view, looking southeast. Stone faced garage is to the right. (Frame garage left of stone garage in this photo is not part of this property.)
4. Cabins 8 and 9, and office, looking northeast.
5. Cabins 7-9, looking east-northeast.
6. Cabins 4-7, looking south.
7. Front of office with cabins 1-3, looking southwest.
8. Cabins 1-4, looking south.
9. Backs of cabins 1-3, looking south.
10. Cabin #6, interior view from bedroom.

Photo Key.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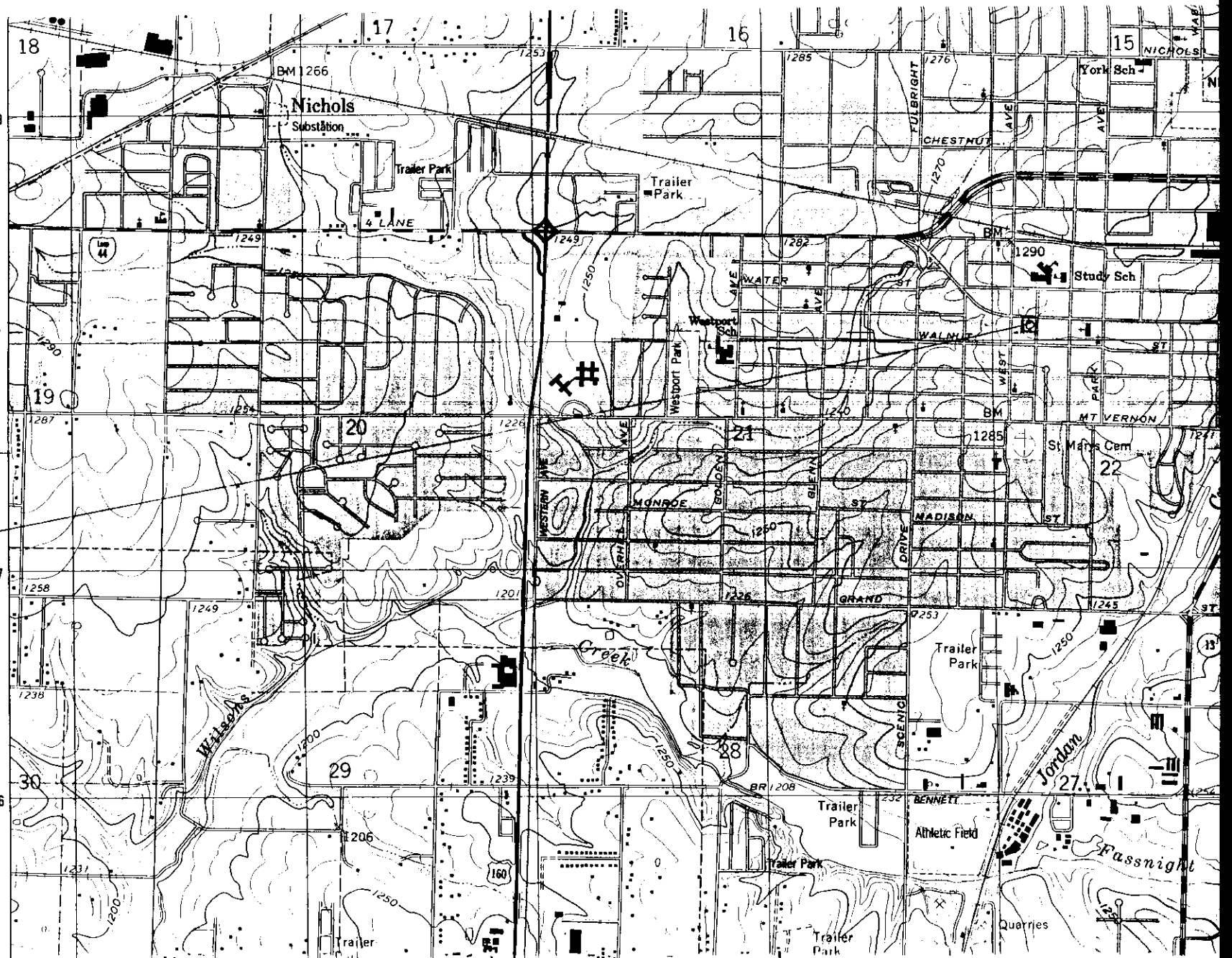

ROCK FOUNTAIN COURT HISTORIC DISTRICT
SPRINGFIELD, GREENE COUNTY, MO

15/471211/4117858

(LESS THAN ONE ACRE)

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