

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received **SEP 8 1982**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic J. L. Brandeis and Sons Store Building (D009:2-35)  
and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 200 South 16th Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of Second congressional district  
state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 55

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Braiker/Brandeis Development Company  
Attn: Morton and Claire Braiker, c/o John Gilroy  
street & number Whitmore and Gilroy P.C., 10838 Old Mill Road  
city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of Nebraska 68154 state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Douglas County Register of Deeds  
street & number Douglas County Courthouse, 1819 Farnam Street  
city, town Omaha state Nebraska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Omaha City Architecture Certified Part 1  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1977  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Omaha Landmarks, Inc.  
city, town Omaha state Nebraska

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Designed in the Second Renaissance Revival style by John Latenser, Sr., the Brandeis Building was erected in 1906 as an eight-story structure, one of the largest buildings in Omaha at that time. The handsome building, one block long and a half a block wide, sits on the south side of Douglas Street between 16th and 17th Streets. A two-story addition was built in 1921 making the building its present ten stories. A parking garage connects to the building on the west. Facing materials are stone, terra-cotta and brick. The interior features high ceilings and columns. Imposing Corinthian columns highlight the first floor. The building remains a visual landmark in downtown Omaha. Its condition and integrity remains good.

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The building facade is organized into distinct horizontal divisions by pronounced belt or string courses. Each floor is articulated differently. The window trim and surrounding detail also changes from floor to floor. Arched openings located on the front elevation (east side) differ from straight-headed openings above the lower floors and on the north elevation. Some windows have pedimented openings. Enriched and projecting cornices are supported with large modillions or consoles. The horizontal separation between the ninth and tenth floors is highlighted with a balustrade. The Brandeis Building is large, both absolutely and in scale, a distinguishing characteristic of the Second Renaissance Revival style. Stone, terra-cotta and brick are the facing materials. Continuous pilaster-like piers of brick clad the vertical elements of the steel skeleton. At the base the arched openings of the ground story and the mezzanine reveal the true width of the actual bays of the steel skeleton. The considerably broad piers are topped with ornament that forms a sort of capital.

Inside, large fluted Corinthian columns rise majestically to a commanding height on the first floor of the Brandeis Building. Columns and high ceilings are prevalent throughout the building.

The Brandeis parking garage is now attached to the west side of the store building, using air rights over 17th Street. The garage is not included as a part of the nomination to the National Register.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			
1906 original eight stories		John Latenser, Sr.		
<b>Specific dates</b> 1921 two story addition		<b>Builder/Architect</b> George B. Prinz		

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The building is significantly associated with the department store of J. L. Brandeis and Sons. Now a major retail chain in the Midwest, the Brandeis store traces its roots to Omaha and the founder, Jonas L. Brandeis. With innovative retail marketing techniques the company grew and prospered. In turn, the Brandeis family were in the forefront of the development and growth of Omaha. Designed in the grand department store tradition by John Latenser, Sr., the original building was constructed in 1906. The building is a fine example of Latenser's use of the Second Renaissance Revival style and remains a downtown Omaha landmark.

Brandeis is a name synonymous with retail department store operations in Omaha, in Nebraska and in the Midwest. This pioneer mercantile establishment is closely linked with the history of Omaha. The J. L. Brandeis & Sons Store Building was the flagship of a fleet of department stores, which was one of the largest and most important chains west of Chicago. For nearly three-quarters of a century, the Brandeis Store Building was the focal point of commercial activity in downtown Omaha. This grand department store structure, built in the tradition of its contemporaries, Macy's and Marshall Field, is representative of a long-gone era of merchandising. Its physical size and interior layout were designed to promote personal and total service, employee loyalty and customer comfort and convenience.

Jonas L. Brandeis, a native of Austria, came to Omaha in 1881. Brandeis opened a small store at 506 S. 13th, known as The Fair. The business grew and the store moved to a more favorable location at Sixteenth and Douglas Streets in 1888. With his sons in partnership the Boston Store, as it was known, did an increased business.

By the turn of the century, Jonas's three sons, Arthur, Hugo, and Emil, had assumed most of the everyday responsibility for the business. The business name became J. L. Brandeis & Sons, which reflected Jonas's sons' increasing responsibilities. The eldest son, Arthur, ascended to the presidency when Jonas died in 1903. The sons continued their team management until Emil and Hugo died prior to World War I. George Brandeis, a nephew of the founder was made general manager. E. John Brandeis, Arthur's son, first assumed a major leadership role in store operations in 1916 upon his father's death. He shared administrative responsibilities with George Brandeis, George serving as president until his death in 1948.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .8 acres

Quadrangle name Omaha North, Nebr.-Iowa

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	5
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2	5	13	3	9	10
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4	5	7	1	8	9	5
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The structure occupies lots 1-4 of block 117 in the Omaha city plat, which is the half block on the south side of Douglas Street between 16th and 17th Streets. The building is rectangular in shape being 132'x264' in size.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas J. McCusker and Fred M. Greguras, Attorneys;  
Barger & Wolen, Attorneys; Wilscom, Mullins, Birge, Architects;

organization c/o Nebraska State Historical Society date June, 1982

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-3850

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Mervin D. Knott* date 8/27/82

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Pete Grovum*

date 10/20/82

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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During E. John Brandeis's presidency to his death in 1974, Brandeis increased its business dominance in the region. Under his leadership, the organization expanded from a single large department store in downtown Omaha to one of the largest closely held retail enterprises in the nation. In addition to being a driving force in the retailing business, E. John Brandeis continued the family's support of Omaha. He was a believer in Omaha and its future. Downtown Omaha received a solid vote of confidence through Brandeis's financing of several downtown parking facilities and other new structures. One of the parking facilities replaced the Brandeis Theater and Office Building, a 1909 contribution to Omaha's growth. The significant measures helped downtown Omaha avoid further deterioration.

In 1906, eight floors of the present ten-story structure were constructed at a cost of \$650,000. Initially, only the basement and three floors were used in the Brandeis business. The other floors were leased to a bank and as professional offices.

The new store building was awe-inspiring to turn-of-the-century Omaha. According to an early newspaper account, the store had the longest single sales aisle of any store in the world, running west from the 16th Street entrance. When the Brandeis Theater was completed in 1909, it was linked to the store by an underground arcade. A broad strip of red pavement guided fashionable ladies across 17th Street for matinee performances at the theater to complement afternoon shopping tours.

A two story addition, constructed in 1921, brought the height of the building to its present ten stories. Because of innovative merchandising and a service orientation theme, business volume had grown so immensely that the Brandeis Store now consumed all ten floors and the basement of the building. Soon after the addition of the tenth floor, Sorenson's The Story of Omaha, reported that:

The tenth floor is taken up with restaurants, which in point of beauty and convenience compare favorably with the most celebrated cafes in New York, Chicago and San Francisco. This is especially true of the Italian renaissance room, which is the most attractive feature of the establishment.

The Brandeis family and store building have been the source of many innovative retail marketing practices and customer services and conveniences. In the late 1880's, Jonas Brandeis initiated the use of sidewalk sales as a major marketing approach. He also would mark bargain prices on his goods, pack them into a wagon and drive around the city as a mobile means of attracting customers to his store. His grandson, E. John Brandeis, was in the vanguard of those who recognized and utilized television as an advertising medium. Brandeis was the first store in Omaha to send buyers to Europe.

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One of Omaha's first revolving doors was installed in the Brandeis Building in 1906 to reduce the winter wind that discomforted customers and employees. This early energy conservation program was followed by many other convenience-oriented features such as the installation of air conditioning and escalators long before other merchants in the central business area.

The Brandeis Building was the first mercantile establishment in Omaha to be a total service store for its customers. Its leadership recognized the marketing importance of having restaurants, a post office, community meeting rooms, free telephone service, a bill-paying service and other amenities under one roof and implemented this approach in the design of the Brandeis Store Building.

The Brandeis commitment to, and confidence in Omaha is further affirmed in the leadership of the family and firm in Omaha's development. Many of the large buildings constructed in downtown Omaha during the early years of this century were either partially or wholly Brandeis enterprises. The ground on which the Fontenelle Hotel stands was given by Brandeis to the hotel's developers and Brandeis made a major financial investment in the hotel's construction. The Fontenelle was one of the finest hotels in the country when it opened. The erection of the Medical Arts Building, the one-time medical center of Omaha, was largely financed by Brandeis. The old Omaha Athletic Club building on Douglas Street was promoted and financed by the Brandeis enterprise as was the Omaha Elks building.

The original architect, John Latenser, Sr. (1858-1936) was a native of Liechtenstein and born to a family of master architects. He received his training at the Royal Polytechnical School in Stuttgart, Germany. He immigrated to America and practiced in several cities before settling in Omaha in 1885. Latenser enjoyed a prolific practice, most of his commissions being for public school buildings. Notable structures designed by Latenser include the Douglas County Courthouse (Douglas County, NRHP) and Central High School (Omaha High School, Douglas County, NRHP).

The J. L. Brandeis and Sons Store Building is an example of Latenser's successful use of the Second Renaissance Revival style. The Brandeis store is a visual landmark in downtown Omaha. Although not as large as several office buildings of the same period its ten-story height covering half a city block made it the largest retail establishment in the downtown and provided considerable visual impact on 16th Street, 17th Street, and the Farnam Street hill for many blocks.

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