

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received JUN 12 1984
date entered JUL 12 1984

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

1. Name

historic Cowan, McClung and Company Building

and/or common Fidelity Building

2. Location

street & number 500-504 Gay Street N/A not for publication

city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Knox code 093

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 Judy Benson, H.T. Hackney, et al., c/o Fidelity Properties, Inc.

street & number 500- 504 Gay Street

city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37917

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registrar of Deeds, City-County Building

street & number 400 Main Avenue

city, town Knoxville state Tennessee 37902

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Knox County Historic Site Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 to present federal state county local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission

city, town 701 Broadway, Nashville state Tennessee 37203

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at the corner of Gay Street and Union Avenue in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee (pop. 174,587), the Cowan, McClung and Company Building is a four-story, Second Renaissance Revival brick structure. The building was erected in 1871 and the front (west) facade was extensively remodeled in 1929. The prominent Baumann family of architects in Knoxville designed both the original building and the new front elevation. Despite alterations, the structure retains its architectural and historical integrity.

The original 1871 front (west) facade was a typical commercial Italianate design of the period with segmentally arched windows, storefronts with cast-iron Corinthian columns, and a heavy bracketed cornice with a central pediment and balustrade. During the 1929 remodeling, the original storefronts and their columns were taken off and a veneer of dressed-faced ashlar was applied to the first story. On the other stories of the front elevation and on one bay of the north elevation, a veneer of new brick was used with the spacing of the original windows retained. At this time the 1871 cornice, pediment, and balustrade were removed and replaced with a smaller, dentiled cornice.

The front (west) facade still retains its 1929 appearance. The elevation is divided into three major bays by pilaster strips. Within each bay is a row of three windows which are segmentally arched on the second story and flat arched on the third and fourth stories. Architectural details from 1929 include the first-story recessed entrance with a shouldered architrave surround and a garland and eagle frieze and the second-story vousoirs with floral motifs.

The north (side) elevation along Union Avenue was somewhat changed in 1929 by the removal of a roof parapet and a pediment over the facade's central bay, which retained its original segmentally arched windows. Another change was the introduction of flat-arched windows into three of the other four bays of the north elevation which in 1871 were blank walls. The 1871 central bay is defined by rusticated pilaster strips with the fenestration of the second, third, and fourth stories consisting of a row of five windows with segmental hoodmolds and prominent keystones.

The rear (east) elevation was unaltered in the 1929 remodeling. Nine segmentally arched windows are symmetrically placed across the second, third, and fourth stories. Because of a sloping site, the building's basement is a full story on the rear facade. A recent one-bay, two-story rear addition covers the basement and first-story walls.

The originally blank south (side) elevation has had flat-arched windows added on the fourth story. The second and third stories have no fenestration, and the first story wall is covered by an adjoining one-story building.

Most of the building's interior details date from the 1929 remodeling. The central hall has gray marble walls and floors as well as wide plaster cornices and an octagonal ceiling medallion. The former banking room retains its square pillars with modified Corinthian capitals and its large plaster cornices.

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 checked="" 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		

Specific dates 1871, 1929 **Builder/Architect** 1871 - J.F. Baumann & P.J. Williamson
 1929 remodeling - Baumann & Baumann

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cowan, McClung and Company Building is being nominated under National Register criteria A and C. The significance of the building lies in its architectural distinction and its importance in the commercial history of Knoxville. Designed by the locally well-known Baumann family of architects, the structure is one of the best examples of the Second Renaissance Revival style remaining in the city. The building has housed the main offices of three companies which have been prominent in the economic development of Knoxville; Cowan, McClung and Company from 1871 to 1919, the Anderson-Dulin-Varnell Company from 1919 to 1929, and Fidelity-Bankers Trust Company from 1919 to 1964.

The origins of Cowan, McClung and Company date back at least to 1830 when the three McClung brothers, Matt, Hugh, and F.H., were among the leading merchants in Knoxville. Their father, Charles McClung, had been a surveyor for the founder of Knoxville, James White, and had married White's daughter, Margaret. By 1850 the town's largest wholesale establishments were McClung, Wallace and Company (Matt, Hugh, and F.H. McClung), C.M. McClung and Company (son of F.H. McClung), and Cowan and Dickinson. In 1858 Cowan, McClung and Company was established by the merger of Cowan and Dickinson with McClung, Wallace and Company. The wholesale drygoods business prospered so well that by 1868 the company paid \$9,824 in state and local taxes, making it Tennessee's biggest taxpayer. In 1871 shortly before James Henry Cowan's death, the business moved into the nominated building at the important corner of Gay and Union. Cowan, McClung and Company continued its prominence in Knoxville's wholesale clothing trade until 1919 when the company closed.

The second business to occupy the building was also a major wholesale drygoods company, Anderson-Dulin-Varnell, which stayed at the location from 1919 to 1929. In addition to its wholesale division, the company operated Miller's Department Store, one of Knoxville's most important retail businesses. One of the partners in the company was Hanson Lee Dulin (1870-1941), whose Knoxville residence was designed by John Russell Pope in 1915 and is now the Dulin Gallery of Art.

The building's next occupant from 1929 to 1964 was one of the city's leading financial institutions, Fidelity-Bankers Trust Company. Organized in 1914, the company later became Valley Fidelity Bank. In 1964 the bank moved its headquarters from the Cowan, McClung and Company Building to its new office building at Market and Clinch.

The nominated building has had various tenants since 1964 and is currently under rehabilitation/restoration for general commercial and office use.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Knoxville, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	7	2	3	6	8	4	0	3	9	8	3	8	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is bounded on the west by Gay St., the north by Union Ave., the east by a parking lot (Imperial Alley) and on the south by an adjoining property line. The nomination includes only the land on which the building rests.

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

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Nissa Dahlin Brown Lloyd Ostby, Coordinator of Field Services		
organization	Tennessee Historical Commission	date	May 1984
street & number	5608 Lake Shore Drive 701 Broadway	telephone	615-577-3410 615-742-6716
city or town	Knoxville Nashville	state	Tennessee 37920 Tennessee 37203

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 National Park Service.

Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Herbert P. Byers*

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date *6/4/84*

For NPS use only

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

for *Herbert P. Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date *7/12/84*

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Cowan, McClung & Co. Bldg. Item number 8 Page 2

The 1871 design for the Cowan, McClung and Company Building has traditionally been attributed to Joseph Francis Baumann (1844-1916) of Knoxville in collaboration with Peter J. Williamson (1826-1907) of Nashville. Baumann later was the architect for the elaborate homes of two of the company's partners, C.J. McClung (1875-6) and J.D. Cowan (1879). The 1929 alterations to the nominated building were the work of Joseph F. Baumann's younger brother and nephew, Albert B. Baumann (1861-1942) and Albert B. Baumann, Jr. (1897-1952). Their firm of Baumann and Baumann was one of the most important architectural partnerships in East Tennessee during the 1920's and 30's. Their work includes the Andrew Johnson Hotel (1926-30, NR), Park Junior High School (1927, NR), and the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (1935) in Knoxville.

The Cowan, McClung and Company Building is an outstanding example of the Second Renaissance Revival style in Knoxville. The major elements of the late phase of the style can be seen in the building's rusticated first story and the arcaded second story as well as in the details of the interior pillars and cornices. Among the few comparable Second Renaissance Revival buildings in Knoxville are the Burwell Building (1907, 1928, NR) and the Mechanics Bank and Trust Company (1907, 1923, NR). Although most of the Italianate features of the building have been removed, the unaltered central bay of the north facade and the fenestration of the east elevation are noteworthy remnants of the Italianate style in Knoxville.

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Continuation sheet Cowan, McClung and
Company Building

Item number 9

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Major Bibliographical References

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Rule, William. Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee. Chicago: Lewis Publishing
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