	RECEIVE
NPS Form 10-900	ONB No. 10024-0018
United States Department of the In NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC	nterior National Park Service
	PLACES REGISTRATION FORM
1. Name of Property	NAIIO
historic name: <u>United Carbon Building</u> other name/site number: <u>Boulevard Towe</u>	
2. Location	
street & number: <u>1018 Kanawha Boulevard</u> city/town: <u>Charleston</u> state: <u>W. Va.</u> code: <u>WV</u> county: <u>Kanaw</u>	vicinity:
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	
As the designated authority under the Na of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify th request for determination of eligible standards for registering properties in Places and meets the procedural and pro- in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the p meet the National Register Criteria. I considered significant nationally	hat this <u></u> nomination ility meets the documentation the National Register of Historic fessional requirements set forth property <u></u> meets <u></u> does not recommend that this property be
William Q Carren	6.8.94
Signature of Certifying Official	Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	Date
In my opinion, the property meets Register criteria. (See continuation	
Signature of Certifying Official/Title	Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	
4. National Park Service Certification	
I, hereby certify that this property is	
<pre> 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</pre>	Signature of Keeper of Action Coson M. Boall 7-15-94 Entered in the National Register
other (explain):	

٠

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV Name of Property County and State 5. Classification Ownership of Property: **Category of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply) (Check only one box) X private <u>X</u> building(s) ____ object ___ district ___ public-local ____ site ___ public-State structure public-Federal Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.) Contributing Noncontributing _____ buildings 1 0 0 0 _____ sites _____ structures 0 0 0 objects 0 TOTAL 1 0 Name of related multiple property listing N/A (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register ____0 6. Function or Use Historic Functions Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) (Enter categories from instructions) COMMERCE: Business: Office Building COMMERCE: Business: Office Building 7. Description Architectural Classification: Materials (Enter categories from instructions) (Enter categories from instructions) MODERN: Art Moderne, International Foundation CONCRETE Walls BRICK, STEEL, GLASS, GRANITE Roof BALLASTED MEMBRANE Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

<u>United Carbon Building</u> Name of Property <u>Kanawha County, WV</u> County and State

8. Statement of Significance Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.) A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. X B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction. _ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.) Property is: ___ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. ____ B removed from its original location. C a birthplace or grave. D a cemetery. ___ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure. F a commemorative property. G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING	
INDUSTRY	
COMMERCE	

Period of Significance 1940-1941

United Carbon Building Name of Property

Kanawha County, WV County and State

Significant Dates 1940 - Design Phase

1941 - Construction and Completion

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) Oscar Nelson

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder

Walter F. Martens, Architect

Robert E. Martens, Designer & Sculptor

Robert W. Hayworth, Structural Engineer

H.B. Agsten & Sons, General Contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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: _____

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV Name of Property County and State 10. Geographical Data Acreage of Property: less than one (1) acre UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) 1 17 444560 4244210 2 Easting Easting Northing Zone Northing Zone 3 4 Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing Zone 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: Carl F. Aqsten, Jr., Architectural Historian Organization: WV Div. of Culture & History Date: February 28, 1994 Street & Number: Cultural Center Telephone: (304) 558-0220 City or Town: Charleston State:<u>WV</u> ZIP: <u>25305</u> 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 FPO for any additional items)

United Carbon Building Name of Property

Kanawha County, WV County and State

Property Owner

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

Name: <u>Arcus Associates, Inc.</u>

Street & Number: 1018 Kanawha Boulevard E. Telephone: (304) 344-3156

City or Town: Charleston State: WV Zip: 25301

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>7</u> Page <u>1</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Description

The United Carbon Building is a 12-story office building located on the northwest corner of Broad Street and Kanawha Boulevard in downtown Charleston. Its slender volume rises 157 feet from the sidewalk to the twelfth-floor penthouse, which once served as the office of the building's prominent patron, Oscar Nelson (1879-1953). The building opened with public ceremony on October 17, 1941, and was described by the Charleston Gazette that day as a "streamlined landmark of a greater Charleston." It is a steel-framed building sheathed in a smooth, unornamented shell of gold-colored brick, black steel and glass. The base of the building is faced with black granite, alberene stone and bronze trim, with a principal entrance portico on the corner. The building was commissioned in 1939 as the national headquarters for the United Carbon Company, which occupied the ninth through the twelfth floors until 1950. Under continuous successful use as commercial rental space in Charleston, the building has undergone remarkably few changes, and retains a high level of integrity under the present ownership of Arcus Associates, Inc.

The site for the building, purchased from the George Washington Life Insurance Company in December 1939, is a deep, narrow lot fronting the newly-constructed boulevard on the Kanawha River. Oscar Nelson, president of the United Carbon Company, commissioned architect Walter F. Martens to design the company's international headquarters on this lot. Because of the site's depth, Martens was able to set the building back generously from the boulevard, while providing parking in the rear. Sidewalks surrounding the building were originally constructed of a special mix of concrete combined with a pigment of carbon black, which both complemented the building's black-and-gold color scheme and reduced glare (the original walks have since been replaced with a standard concrete mix). The building's narrow design provided setbacks to the east and west as well, allowing ample space for sidewalks on Broad Street and a walled garden terrace on the west side.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>7</u> Page <u>2</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Description (continued)

The structural system of the building consists of a steel skeleton, diagonally braced to compensate for the tall narrow shape, with steel-pan concrete floor slabs and a steel roof structure. According to records from the time of construction, the structure is supported by 315 concrete piles driven 48 feet below street level (<u>Gazette</u>, October 17, 1941). The basement and sub-basement walls are solid concrete with membrane waterproofing. The exterior walls are hollow clay tile, with brick and stone cladding. Original interior walls are constructed of 2- and 4-inch hollow tile with plaster finish. The concrete floor slabs are thickened with a 1-inch overlay to allow the installation of underfloor electrical raceways.

Materials for the exterior of the structure are based upon the United Carbon Company's corporate color scheme of black and gold. The brick veneer of the upper floors has a golden tone. The windows, glazed in 1/4-inch polished plate glass, are set in black steel sashes. The ground floor is clad in Minnesota black granite and Virginia alberene stone. The black alberene cladding steps up to three stories at the inset walls of the northern section, creating a "seat" for the structure and thereby enhancing the sculptural effect of the design.

The southeast corner of the building is rounded, with an inset portico on the first floor serving as the principal entrance. The entrance steps and paving are constructed of pink granite. The walls and ceiling of the portico are faced with polished black granite. The granite slabs of the ceiling, cut in a pattern which reflects the curves of the entrance corner are held in place by bronze bolts with exposed heads. Inset in the polished granite walls are seven reliefs in bronze depicting the industrial processes of carbon black production.

On the outside corner of the portico stands a bronze statue which bears the inscription, "From the Fullness of the Earth." The figure and bronze reliefs were sculpted by Robert E. Martens, who was partner in his father's firm of Martens and Son. In an article written for the <u>Charleston Daily Mail</u>, Robert Martens explained that the figure "represents a workman, not definitely a laborer, nor a chemist, nor an office man. A figure of vision but also a man who by sweat and toil is taking the ingredients from the earth and processing them into useful

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>7</u> Page <u>3</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Description (continued)

finished products." (<u>Daily Mail</u>, Oct. 17, 1941) The young Martens adds that he was "inspired, too, by Oscar Nelson . . . who as a youth came to this country with ambition and determination, but above all with a broad vision and a courageous faith." (Ibid.)

Behind the sculpture, a large pair of entrance doors made of Herculite glass, with curved glass sidelights and polished bronze trim, create a dramatic transition to the interior. The entrance and elevator lobby extend through the length of the building from front to rear, flooding the space with light at both ends. Additional light for the lobby is provided by fluorescent cove lights running continuously around the perimeter of the ceiling. The walls are faced with polished black Belgian marble. The lobby floors are patterned in black and gold terrazzo. The elevator doors, mail box and concession stand are of bronze and are strongly moderne in style.

The central core of the building, containing the stair tower, elevator shafts, restrooms and elevator lobbies, is located in the center of the west wall. The black porcelain drinking fountains of <u>moderne</u> styling are still in use.

The interior stairway is remarkable among commercial structures for its functional yet elegant design. The space is lit by a continuous vertical strip of glass blocks which run along the west elevation. The terrazzo stair landings, treads and risers are still in place, as are the railings of polished bronze.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number _____ Page ____

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Description (continued)

While the common areas on each floor have undergone few changes, the office spaces around them have undergone the many alterations one would expect in fifty years of tenancy. The rental space on a typical floor was originally split into 14 office bays with a central corridor extending from the lobby on each side. The slender shape of the building allowed all offices to have a wall with essentially continuous windows, 5' high and 3' above the floor line. The strips of windows were divided by wide mullions to accommodate flexible placement of future partitions. All windows were once equipped with stainless steel venetian blinds by Pella. Terrazzo window stools under the strip of windows were inset with discharge grilles for the air conditioning equipment housed beneath the windows in each office.

The offices of the United Carbon Company occupied the 9th through 12th levels. The reception area was located on the 9th floor. The 12th floor served as the executive suite and office of Oscar Nelson. Walls in the executive suite were once faced in quarter-sawn teakwood veneer. The 12th floor, now occupied by a law firm, has undergone additional partitioning and lost most of its original finish materials. It does, however, retain its distinctive layout, with a curved glass wall on the south side and two pairs of double doors leading to a roof deck (still one of the best views in Charleston).

The offices of the United Carbon Company were originally furnished with wall hangings and window curtains designed and woven by Loja Saarinen, wife of Eliel Saarinen and instructor at the Cranbrook Academy. This project's connection to Cranbrook was facilitated by Robert Martens, who attended the school during the United Carbon Building's design. Oscar Nelson supported the Cranbrook vision of integrated design. In addition to the wall hangings and curtains, the corporate spaces for the United Carbon Company were once furnished with chairs, tables, ceramics and other amenities created at Cranbrook. A sampling of the corporate spaces and their rich furnishings are shown in a <u>Pencil Points</u> article which featured this building.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 5

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Description (continued)

FLOOR PLANS FOR THE UNITED CARBON BUILDING (From <u>Pencil Points</u>, October 1944)



TYPICAL FLOOR







NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>1</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Statement of Significance

On the day it opened the United Carbon Building was recognized as a significant Charleston landmark. Today it is significant as a masterful work of architecture and engineering, and as a resource which symbolizes and documents the achievements of a West Virginia industrial giant, Oscar Nelson (1879-1953). His career is a rags-to-riches story, beginning as a struggling immigrant from Sweden and ending as a prominent industrial producer and exporter. The construction of the United Carbon Company's headquarters marked the greatest period of growth for the company, and enabled Nelson to spare no expense in the creation of "West Virginia's Finest Office Building." (Charleston Gazette, Oct. 17, 1941)

Historical Background

Oscar Nelson's life and accomplishments have been well documented by a contemporary of his, Phil Conley, in an article for the <u>West Virginia</u> <u>Review</u>. Conley's account, entitle "Genius of the Carbon Black Industry," was reprinted in the <u>Charleston Gazette</u> on opening day of the building, and again, under separate cover, as a tribute to Nelson in later years. Conley tells the story of a tall blond youth who came to New York at the age of 20 to seek opportunity. This young man, Oscar Nelson, was born on March 2, 1879 in a farming community of Sweden. In 1899, three years after his mother's death, he used a modest inheritance to leave his father, two brothers and two sisters for a chance of fortune in America.

Nelson first found work in Pennsylvania as a laborer in a factory of the Peerless Carbon Company. In 1900 the company began producing carbon black in a large plant in Grantsville, West Virginia, and Nelson was transferred there. After four years of work at three carbon black factories, Nelson gain management status and transferred to Weston. In 1908 he was promoted to general superintendent of what later became known as the Columbia Carbon Company.

Nelson resigned in 1916 to begin his own venture with to wealthy friends and partners from Weston. T.F. Koblegard and Thomas A. Whelan invested \$250,000 in a new carbon black production facility, and Nelson came on as equal partners for his expertise and work as general manager. Under Nelson's successful management, the group combined a number of smaller companies in 1925 to form the United Carbon Company. Within a year Nelson was named as president of the new corporation.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>2</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Statement of Significance (continued)

In 1918 Nelson married Harriet Engstrom of Clarksburg, with whom he had four children: John Oscar, Anna Marie, Thomas Arthur and Eric. When the United Carbon Company moved its headquarters to Charleston in the mid-1930s, the Nelson family moved with it. They took up residence at 1557 Quarrier Street, and later purchased a country home near Lewisburg named Morlunda (NR listed), where they bred prize-winning cattle for years.

The United Carbon Company's expansion in the 1930s was extraordinary. According to the <u>Charleston Gazette</u> the company in 1941:

[is] The largest producer of carbon black in the world with last year's output estimated at 134,000,000 pounds.

Operates 16 carbon black plants in Texas, Louisiana, Kansas and Oklahoma.

[is] An important producer and distributor of natural gas with extensive gas land holdings in West Virginia, Kentucky, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and other states.

Manufactures gasoline and salt.

In addition to Charleston central offices has branch offices in New York City, Chicago and Akron.

It was from this success that Nelson was prompted to create a national headquarters for the company.

The Kanawha Boulevard in 1938 when plans were first conceived was under construction. The first major portion was completed in the summer of 1939, and was hailed as a remarkable engineering achievement and marvel of modern transportation. A site along the riverside boulevard was fitting for Nelson's building.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>3</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Statement of Significance (continued)

In 1939 the United Carbon Company hired the prominent local architectural firm of Martens and Son for the design of their headquarters. Walter F. Martens (1890-1969) had gained prominence at an early age as the architect of the West Virginia Executive Mansion (1925), the Georgian-style Colonial Revival home still in use as the governor's residence today. This project gained him praise from Cass Gilbert, who was at work on the adjacent State Capitol at the time (Collins, "Dictionary of West Virginia Architects"). In the 1920s Martens designed a number of residences in the Colonial, Classical and Tudor Revival style. In the 1930s and '40s Martens designed a number of buildings in more modern styles, most notably Riverview Terrace Apartments (1937), which is just a block east of the United Carbon Building.

It appears that Walter Martens' son, Robert E. Martens (b. July 29, 1919), joined his father's firm specifically in connection with the United Carbon Building commission. At that time Robert was attending the famed Cranbrook Academy, and the Martens firm appeared to benefit greatly his connection to the school, which was at the peak of its influence and creative energy. A preliminary model for the building was created by Robert at Cranbrook, under the supervision of Eliel and Eero Saarinen. The model, constructed of wood, plastic and cardboard, was equipped with a light inside to show a view of the building at night. This model met the approval and praise of Oscar Nelson and his board. As mentioned in the description, the staff at Cranbrook was also involved in the design and production of furnishings for the building.

Architectural Significance

Among modern buildings in the state, the United Carbon Building stands out as a West Virginia landmark of great architectural significance. Its prominence in its time is signified by its appearance in <u>Pencil Points</u> in October 1944, where is was praised as an exemplar of integrated and functional design.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>4</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Statement of Significance (continued)

The October 1944 issue of Pencil Points was devoted to a discussion of integrated design. This issue of the Pencil Points was entitled "Progressive Architecture," which shortly thereafter became the magazine's A rendering by Constantino Nivola of the United Carbon Building name. appeared on the cover. The building was prominently featured in a 14-page article as well, where it was praised as follows:

It is . . . particularly gratifying to present this fine new office building, wherein the architects have achieved a rare degree of integration between the diverse elements of plan, materials, structural system, and systems of control. It is not only a striking instance of this important design factor, illustrating the fine architecture that results from a knowledgeable approach, but it sets a high standard for the design of office buildings of this size, a great many of which are likely to be built in postwar years.

Pencil Points (October 1944)

The building was praised for its lack of superficial ornamentation, its highly functional design, and the sculptural relationship between its functional parts.

The <u>Pencil Points</u> article noted that the "most striking instance of thoroughgoing integration" was the air-conditioning system. It was in this area that the building had perhaps its greatest innovations as well. Designed, furnished and installed by a new company named the Carrier Corporation, it was the first of its kind in the country. As an early year-round system, still in use today, it has been highly efficient. Separate unit conditioners are located in each room under the windows, and are individually controlled by thermostat. The central plant, located in the sub-basement, brings in water from the river, and delivers it two four separate zones corresponding to each exposure of the building. This was a breakthrough in technology, and marked the beginning of Carrier's success in HVAC equipment.

Beyond the needs of function, the air-conditioning system integrates its use with the design of the building. Pencil Points stated that the system "is so coordinated with other architectural elements that it is impossible to find a point where engineering or mechanical equipment or finished design are clearly defined. All are inseparably fused into the single concept of architecture -- progressive architecture of a high order."

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>5</u>

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Statement of Significance (continued)

<u>Conclusion</u>

The United Carbon Building is a significant landmark on many levels. It stands as a monument to the accomplishments of one man, Oscar Nelson, who built a thriving industrial corporation from the ground up. So tied to Oscar Nelson's life and work is this property that a replica of the building's form stands as his burial stone in the Sunset Memorial Gardens of Spring Hill.

The building's significance under Criterion C as a great achievement of architecture and engineering is undeniable. Though Walter Martens was the chief architect, the contributions of many parties were essential to the project. The structural engineer, Robert Hayworth, contributed greatly to the form and function of the structure. Robert Martens, at that time a talented sculptor and aspiring architect, utilized his vision and training at Cranbrook to leave an indelible mark of the building. Carrier supplied the innovative controls and equipment which won great praise. Finally, the staff of the Cranbrook Academy joined in the project to create a statement of their integrated approach to design.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 Page 1

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Bibliography

Clark, Robert Judson; Belloli, Andrea P.A. <u>Design in America: The</u> <u>Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950</u>. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983.

Clark, Walter E. <u>West Virginia Today</u>. Charleston: West Virginia Editors' Association, 1941.

Collins, Rodney. "Dictionary of West Virginia Architects: 1863-1973."

Conley, Phil. "Genius of the Carbon Black Industry." <u>West Virginia Review</u>, February 1933. Reprinted in <u>The Charleston Gazette</u> as "Carbon Company President Worked Up From Bottom," October 17, 1941.

Reid, Kenneth, ed. "United Carbon Building, Charleston, West Virginia," <u>Pencil Points</u>, vol. 25, Oct. 1944, pp. 58-71.

Turner, Francis W. and Mary Eloise, eds. "United Carbon Builds a Home," The West Virginia Review, October 1940, pp. 20-21.

<u>Charleston Daily Mail</u>, Friday, October 17, 1941. 10-page insert on opening of United Carbon Building.

<u>Charleston Gazette</u>, Friday, October 17, 1941. 12-page insert on opening of United Carbon Building.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 1

United Carbon Building Kanawha County, WV

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the United Carbon Building is shown as Parcel #25 on Charleston Tax Map #13, and is shaded on the accompanying tax map.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the nominated building.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

