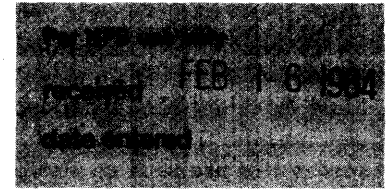


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**



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

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

**1. Name**

historic DERMON BUILDING

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number 46 North Third Street N/A not for publication

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 47 county Shelby code 157

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Milton C. Picard and Murray Reiter, Trustees

street & number 5645 Murray Road

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 38117

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shelby County Register

street & number 160 Mid-America Mall

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Located in downtown Memphis, Tennessee, the 1925 Dermon Building is a ten-story structure of dark brown brick with Renaissance details in yellow, green, and white terra cotta. The building is primarily surrounded by low commercial buildings and parking lots in an area between the core of the central business district and the city's complex of government offices. Consequently the colorful building is a prominent structure on the edge of the city's skyline. It retains its architectural integrity to a high degree.

The Dermon Building is rectangular in plan, 149 feet wide and 75 feet deep. The structure has a cast-in-place, steel reinforced concrete frame with fifteen bays across the front (N. Third Street) and rear elevations and five bays across the side elevations. A low central penthouse of three bays houses the mechanical core of the building.

Each facade of the building is clad with dark brown brick with yellow, green, and white terra cotta trim. The front (west) and side (north and south) facades are much richer in ornamentation than the rear (east) facade. Terra cotta rope molding in yellow, green, and white provides a border around each of the store fronts. Separation between the first and second stories is defined by a dentilated belt course. Between the second-story windows are vertical bands of yellow and green terra cotta rosettes in five patterns. All the windows are one-over-one double-hung sash with yellow terra cotta sills. The exterior brown brick skin rises up to the tenth floor in one even plane. The grouped windows of the tenth floor and penthouse on the front and side facades have a foliated terra cotta border and a tympanum with a central quatrefoil. Above each tympanum is a bearded male mask between a pair of tall, narrow panels with terra cotta medallions of a squirrel, eagle, and cherub. Decorative gargoyle water spouts of green terra cotta and a simple yellow terra cotta coping terminate the flat roofline.

At the present time the exterior has been altered only slightly. Some brick has been replaced on the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors, because of a small fire in 1982. The ground floor store fronts have signs which cover the tops of the windows and cover a small round window which was part of the original design.

The first floor lobby of the Dermon Building is restrained with the original simple walls and floors of gray marble. The hallways on the upper floors have their original terrazo floors but a number of the offices have been remodeled at various times.

## 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		

**Specific dates** 1925 **Builder/Architect** Pfeil and Awsumb

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dermon Building is nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its local architectural significance and association with its builder Dave Dermon (1883-1963) a prominent Memphis real estate developer between World War I and the Great Depression. Along with providing professional office space, the 1925 building served as the home of Dermon's important real estate company which was significant in the development of the downtown and midtown areas of Memphis. After the more elaborate Kress Building (1927, NR), the Dermon Building exhibits the most colorful use of glazed architectural terra cotta from the 1920s in downtown Memphis. The building is a unique and important example of the work of the locally significant architectural firm of Pfeil and Awsumb.

Dermon came to Memphis at the turn of the century as a young Jewish immigrant from Kiev, Russia. Not long after he arrived, he established in 1909 a general repair and tin-smithing shop on Third and Vance in downtown Memphis. Dermon quickly became known as an astute business person and a man with an uncanny foresight for future real estate developments. He made several lucrative land deals in the Vance area and constructed a few buildings there. In 1915 his interest shifted to the section of Union Avenue between the downtown and the fashionable midtown residential areas. Here he shrewdly established the city's major automobile showrooms, tire companies, and related businesses. In addition to buying and selling land in the area, Dermon personally constructed buildings for the city's Dodge and Buick dealerships as well as for various tire companies. He so transformed the area into what was known as "Auto Row" from the late teens to the early 1960s.

Dermon was also responsible for the construction and development of many apartment buildings and subdivisions in midtown and north Memphis during the 1920s and later. These included the Overton Park Court Apartments on Poplar Avenue, the city's largest apartment building at the time, the Hanover Apartments, and the Avalon in addition to subdivisions such as Jackson Terrace, Palmer Hills, and Kings Park. By the time of Dermon's death in 1963, the assets of his company were estimated at 15 million dollars. With his immigrant background, his quick rise to considerable wealth and prominence was particularly impressive.

The office building for the Dermon Company was constructed in 1925 and designed by the prominent Memphis architects, Charles O. Pfeil (1871-1952) and George Awsumb (1880-1959). Prior to his association with Awsumb in 1922, Pfeil was in partnership with George M. Shaw (1870-1919) with whom he designed many important buildings in Memphis during the early twentieth century, including the Tennessee Trust Building (1906), Fire Engine House #1 (1910), and the Memphis Police Station (1911), all of which are on the National Register. Soon after winning the competition in 1921 for the Memphis Municipal Auditorium, Awsumb moved to Memphis from Chicago, where he had been a successful architect. In

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

The Commercial Appeal, 6/22/63  
 Drawings. Dermon Building. Pfeil and Awsumb, Architects, 9/23  
 Herndon, Joseph L. Dictionary of Architects in Tennessee Until 1930, Columbia  
 University Press, 1975.  
 The Memphis Press Scimitar, 10/26/31 and 4/27/57

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .253 Acres

Quadrangle name N.W. Memphis, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

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3	8	9	2	9	7	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is bounded on the south by Court Avenue, the west by N. Third Street, the north by an alley, and the east by an adjoining property line. The nomination includes only the city lot historically associated with the building.

### 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 Steve Trott, Graduate Architect  
Lloyd Ostby, Coordinator of Field Services  
 organization A.D. Braden, Jr., and Associates date 11/7/83  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
 street & number 1862 Poplarcrest Cove telephone 901-761-0580  
701 Broadway telephone 615-742-6723  
 city or town Memphis state Tennessee 38119  
Nashville state 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 L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/13/84

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
 National Register

date 3/15/84

for Allores Byers  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



