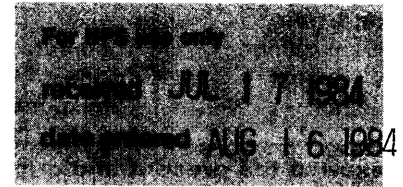


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 Bennie-Dillon Building

and/or common Church Street Center

## 2. Location

street & number 702 Church Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Nashville

N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee

code 047

county Davidson

code 037

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 The Tomlin Group

street & number 333 Union Street

city, town Nashville

N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee 37201

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Davidson County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Nashville

state Tennessee 37201

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Davidson County Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission

city, town Nashville

state Tennessee 37203

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Bennie-Dillon Building is a twelve-story steel and masonry structure located at 702 Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee. Constructed between 1925 and 1927, the building is a good example of the early 20th century high rise structure with its base, shaft and capital design. Elaborate terra cotta decoration is featured on the exterior and it displays detailing based on Renaissance architectural design. It faces both Church Street and Seventh Avenue, North in downtown Nashville and has been used as an office building since its construction. The ground story facade was altered ca. 1960 but the upper facade remains intact and displays its original character. Recent restoration of the ground story resulted in the removal of the alterations and the installation of a new storefront based upon the original design.

The building is located at the corner of Church Street and Seventh Avenue in the downtown area of Nashville. The building occupies a large urban lot and is bounded by the city streets on the east and south and by party walls with adjacent structures on the west and north. The Bennie-Dillon building occupies all of its lot with no other structures or parking areas on the property.

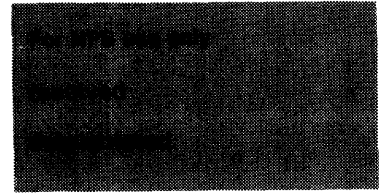
Constructed during Nashville's boom period of the 1920s, the Bennie-Dillon building was erected to be one of the city's largest and most important structures. The building was designed utilizing a steel and concrete frame with a masonry curtain wall and architectural terra cotta cladding. The storefront of the building consisted of limestone blocks separated by large expanses of plate glass in copper frames. The main entrance faced Church Street with a secondary entrance on Seventh Avenue. The Seventh Avenue facade also contained two small shops on the ground story. On the upper facade and at the roofline glazed multi-colored terra cotta was added as the main decorative element. The terra cotta decoration on the Bennie-Dillon building is regarded as one of the most significant in the downtown area.

The Church Street storefront consists of a facing of cut limestone blocks which surround plate glass display windows and a double door entrance. Originally the building displayed a copper transom bar separating the display windows and transoms and this feature has been reproduced in anodized aluminum. On the Seventh Avenue facade the facing of limestone blocks and new display windows have been repeated and two original small storefronts have been restored.

The upper facade of the building is one of the most decorative of any of the city's downtown buildings. At the base of the second story is a small cornice and floriated corbel table of multi-colored glazed terra cotta. This decoration runs the length of both the Church Street and Seventh Avenue facades. Rising from the cornice are thin terra cotta pilaster strips which run the height of the building and separate the window bays on the upper facade. These pilaster strips culminate into a Gothic arch motif at the roofline. Window spandrels on the end bays also display terra cotta panels with

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

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



Continuation sheet      Bennie-Dillon Building      Item number      7      Page      2

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inset shield designs with diagonal banding and the letter "B/D". This shield design was created by the Bennie and Dillon families as an emblem of the building.

In addition to the terra cotta decoration the upper facade features one-over-one metal sash windows original to the building. These windows are rectangular with brick sills. At the roofline is a cornice, corbel table and a stepped parapet all of multi-colored glazed terra cotta. The parapet also displays the building's shield emblem with the inset letters "B/D". This design is repeated on both major facades of the building and no alterations have occurred on the exterior upper floors. The north and west facades of the building face adjacent structures and an interior light well and do not contain any decorative features.

The interior of the Bennie-Dillon Building was originally composed of a central corridor and offices on all floors which faced the street elevations or an interior light well. Part of the first floor area contained commercial businesses with all of the upper floors devoted to office space. The building's basic floor arrangement has not been altered but remodeling has occurred to the interior in past years. The ceiling height has been lowered in most spaces and new paneling applied in some hallways and offices. The original marble lobbies have been retained on the first floor and the marble wainscoting is visible on the upper floor hallways. Restoration of the interior is under way and many of the past remodeling additions shall be removed.

## 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 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** 1925-1927 **Builder/Architect** Asmus and Clark, Architects

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bennie-Dillon Building located at 702 Church Street in Nashville, Tennessee is one of the city's major high rise buildings of the early 20th century. The building has been nominated under criteria B and C because of its architectural design and role in local history. It was built between 1925 and 1927 featuring extensive exterior terra cotta decoration and has served as one of the city's major office buildings for over fifty years. The building's ground story was altered in the 1960s but has since been restored to its original appearance. The upper facade has been retained and displays its original design.

The building was designed by the Nashville architectural firm of Asmus and Clark. Asmus and Clark was a firm composed of architects Christian Asmus and Richard Clark who were both prominent in their field individually before combining to create the firm in 1922. Between 1922 and 1928 the firm designed several notable buildings in Nashville including the Masonic Grand Lodge on Seventh Avenue, the Nashville Trust Building on Union Street and the Berger Building on Eighth Avenue. The Bennie-Dillon building is regarded as one of their best designs and was termed "Italian Renaissance" in appearance upon its completion. The firm's original drawings for the building have been preserved and were used as a basis for the restoration of the structure.

The Bennie-Dillon Building was built between 1925 and 1927 by George Bennie and William Dillon of Nashville. The two men were close personal friends and business partners and in the early 1920s they felt there was a need for a new office building on the west side of the downtown area. Bennie was president of a wholesale merchandise company and served in 1922 as the president of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. Dillon's fortune had been made through real estate and in the early 20th century he was regarded as one of Nashville's most prominent real estate developers. Together, they combined to plan a large twelve story office tower which would serve the growing number of professionals in the downtown area.

Unfortunately, George Bennie died in 1924 but his family agreed to proceed with the financing for the construction of the building. The building was begun in 1925 and it was not to be fully completed until 1927. The Nashville architectural firm of Asmus and Clark designed the building which was erected by the local contracting firm of Foster and Creighton. The design selected for the Bennie-Dillon Building was termed "Italian Renaissance Revival" based upon the building's Gothic arching at the roofline and floriated series of corbel tables. The multi-colored terra cotta decoration also gave the upper facade one of the most distinguished and varied appearances of any of the city's high rise structures.

Upon completion in 1927 the Bennie-Dillon Building was hailed as a welcome addition to the city and was among the largest structures in the downtown area. It became the home

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .21 acres

Quadrangle name Nashville West, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	5	1	9	5	2	0	4	0	0	1	7	6	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 includes the land upon which the building sits and is bounded on the south by Church Street, on the east by Seventh Ave.N, and on the north and west by adjoining property lines. This is all the property historically associated with the Bennie-Dillon 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 Phillip Thomason

organization Thomason and Associates date April 1984

street & number 1700 Hayes Street, Suite 202 telephone (615) 320-5732

city or town Nashville state Tennessee 37212

# 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. Hoge

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 7/12/84

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 8-16-84

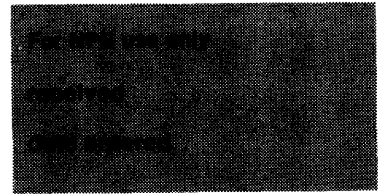
Shelton Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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

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



**Continuation sheet** Bennie-Dillon Building **Item number** 8 **Page** 2

of many Nashville professionals with most occupants listed as doctors, dentists, opticians and finance companies. The Dillon Company moved its offices to the building and managed it into the 1930s. By 1929 the building was 95% occupied and considered a success by the investors. The Depression, however, proved disastrous to the Bennie-Dillon Company with many of the occupants of the building vacating or simply unable to pay the rent. William Dillon died in 1934 after struggling to retain possession of the building but in 1936 foreclosure occurred and it passed into the hands of the First National Bank.

Since possession of the building by the bank, the property has changed ownership several times until its recent purchase. The Bennie-Dillon Building has continued to be utilized as office space and it has occupancy by professionals on all floors. Remodeling in the early 1960s resulted in the installation of a new storefront not in keeping with the original design. Fortunately, the upper facade has not been altered and the multi-colored terra cotta decoration remains intact. In the past year the present owner has restored the original storefront based upon its original appearance and further restoration of the interior is scheduled.

The Bennie-Dillon Building is significant as one of Nashville's earliest high rise buildings and its glazed terra cotta facade is unique in the down area. It is one of the most decorative of the city's high rise buildings and reflects the base, shaft and capital design prominent in early 20th century architecture. Both the Bennie and Dillon families were major forces in the Nashville business community and the building is the culmination of their efforts. The national organization of Friends of Terra Cotta has recognized the significant detailing on the building and it is features in the terra cotta walking tour of downtown Nashville. The Bennie-Dillon building has retained its original character and is a significant structure of the city.

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

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



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Continuation sheet      Bennie-Dillon Building      Item number      9      Page      2

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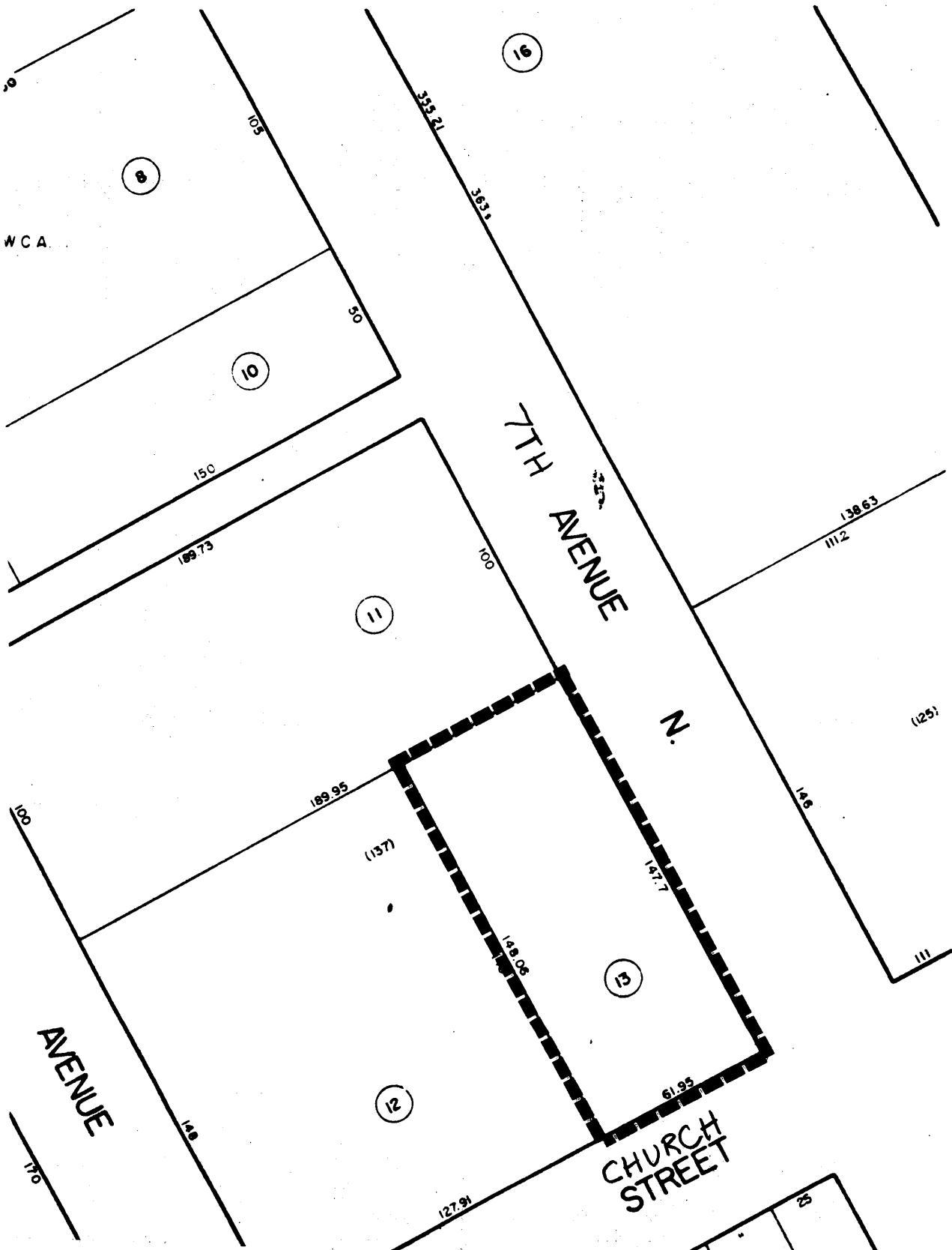
Asmus and Clark Collection. Architectural records on file at the Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Creighton, Wilbur Foster. Building of Nashville. private printing: Nashville, Tennessee, 1969.

Davidson County Deed Records. 1924-1925.

Dillon, Jr., Mrs. W. W. Interview, December 14, 1983. Nashville, Tennessee.

Herndon, Joseph. "Architects in Tennessee until 1930, A Bibliographical Dictionary." Unpublished. M.S. Thesis, Columbia University: New York, 1975.



Bennie -Dillon Building  
702 Church Steet  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee

Tax Map 1" = 50' N↑

