

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

For NPS use only

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

received APR 19 1985

date entered MAY 16 1985

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

1. Name

historic Nash Block (D009:123-9)

and/or common McKesson-Robbins Building

2. Location

street & number 902-12 Farnam N/A not for publication

city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 55

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Omaha

street & number Omaha/Douglas Civic Center, 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of state Nebraska 68102

5. Location of Legal Description

~~Courthouse~~, registry of deeds, ~~at~~ Douglas County Courthouse

street & number 1819 Farnam

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Nash Block is an eight story over raised basement structure, cubic in form, and built of heavy mill construction with exterior masonry bearing walls. A simple, yet dignified Renaissance Revival composition, the building's massing and detailing represent the solidity which is appropriate both to the style, and to the warehouse type.

Built by Mrs. Catharine B. Nash for M. E. Smith and Company in 1905-07 at a cost of \$190,000, this eight story over raised basement structure was designed by the renowned architect, Thomas Rogers Kimball. Designed for use as factory and wholesale warehouse space, the structure reflects state-of-the-art technology in a transitional period of industrial architecture. Structured primarily of heavy timber (mill) construction, Kimball utilized fireproofed cast iron columns for the basement and ground story levels and fireproofed built-up steel beams and columns where required. Exterior walls are of graduated solid masonry construction.

Architect Kimball provided thoroughly detailed documents to produce a functional, up-to-date structure. The building was designed and equipped with the latest fire safety techniques in mind, including brick enclosed stairways and elevators, standard fire doors, standpipes, automatic sprinkler system and outlet scuppers on each floor.

Aesthetically, the building received the same rational thought that the functional, structural and fire protection concerns received. Reflecting a then current tendency toward "realism" in design (primarily expounded by Russell Sturgis), Kimball abandoned highly decorative historicism in favor of a more rational, straightforward approach for this utilitarian structure. The simple, massive brick pile clearly articulates the loft nature of the interior while exhibiting a compositional sophistication for which Kimball was so well known. One should note the compositional variety of the fenestration and other design features including the trabeated openings with exposed cast-iron lintels, the corbelled arcuated brick wall cornice, the heavy stone water table and stilted segmental arches of the ground story and the appropriately massive brick vaulted hood supported by stone consoles marking the south entrance of the building. The symbolic appropriateness which resulted from this image of solidity is noteworthy, as is the choice of a simplified Renaissance Revival character for the structure.

This building, the main building of the M. E. Smith and Company, once stood as an impressive complex of three Smith buildings, one of which was a "twin" structure connected over the rail alley to the north. The complex was recorded to H.A.B.S. standards prior to the demolition of the other two structures as a part of a Section 106 case. This remaining structure was officially determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register by the Acting Keeper of the National Register on February 24, 1981.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1905-1907 **Builder/Architect** ~~XXXXXX~~ Thomas Rogers Kimball

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nash Block is architecturally significant as state-of-the-art technology in industrial architecture during a transitional period in warehouse development, and for associations with one of Nebraska's most distinguished early architects, Thomas Rogers Kimball; the Block is important in the areas of commerce and industry for associations with M. E. Smith and Company, a major manufacturer and wholesaler of dry goods whose business interests encompassed the entire northwest of the United States.

The significance of the Nash Block in the development of factory and warehouse architecture in Nebraska is well established. The building exists adjacent to Omaha's major historic light industrial and warehouse district which runs between 8th and 10th from Douglas to Jackson streets. This area has greater significance from a structural, planning and architectural point-of-view than does the well known "Old Market" district a few blocks away (NRHP). Developed as an early 20th century counterpart to the late 19th century "Old Market", the buildings along 9th street, both individually and collectively represent an architecture which achieved a symbolic and aesthetic appropriateness lacking in the earlier district (with few exceptions; e.g. the Ames Block at 1101-11 Howard streets, Millard Block No. 2 at 1101-07 Harney and the Morse-Coe Building at 1119-23 Howard). And along the 9th street corridor, only three buildings (all by architects Fisher & Lawrie) approach the significance of the Nash and Smith buildings; these are the Crane Building at 323 S. 10th the Fairbanks, Morse & Company Building at 902 Harney and the John Deere Building at 902-12 Howard. The several other interesting buildings in the area relied heavily on historicism, primarily in the use of highly decorative Renaissance Revival motifs. While the development of industrial architecture from the 18th century on is a complex story, there can be little doubt that the Nash building should be considered a high point in that early development in Nebraska.

The Nash Block was designed and constructed at a time when radical changes in industrial and warehouse architecture were on the horizon. Fire safety being one of the most important concerns of the period, it was only one year after the completion of the Nash Block that A. O. Eckerman imported his pioneering reinforced concrete structural system into Omaha with plans for the new John Deere warehouse. Kimball's structural solution relied on the old mill construction, which by that time was known to still be superior to un-protected cast-iron or steel from a fire-safety view. Kimball did, however, incorporate all of the latest fire safety measures, including brick enclosed stairs and elevators, fire doors, standpipes, an automatic sprinkler system, and outlet scuppers on each floor--the first factory-warehouse in Omaha to do so.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name OMAHA NORTH, NEBR.-IOWA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>15</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Described by all of lots 7 and 8, Block 124, Original Town of Omaha, measuring 132 x 132 feet and exactly corresponding to the exterior walls of the building in Section 22, T15N, R13E of the 6th Principal Meridian; and including all historically associated real estate which retains integrity, excluding all formerly associated real estate now associated with the new Central Park Mall.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Murphy, Survey Architect

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date January 1985

street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-3270

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Mervyn D. Kett* date 4/15/85

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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

for *Allores Byers* date 5-16-85
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Continuation sheet Significance Item number 8 Page 2

Historically, the Nash Block was associated with the M. E. Smith Company for whom it was built. The firm was organized about 1870 in Council Bluffs and moved into the Omaha area in 1886. This wholesale dry goods firm continued to grow and soon expanded into the manufacture of clothing about the time they moved into the Ames Block (1101-07 Howard) which was also built expressly for their use (1889). By the turn of the century they were the largest and most important wholesale dry goods firm in Omaha, doing business throughout the Northwest and Alaska. Their continued growth and importance is manifest in the Nash building.

Architecturally, the importance of Thomas Kimball (1862-1934) is well known. Kimball was one of the state's premier architectural talents having received his education at the University of Nebraska, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cowles Art School and the Ecole de Beaux-Arts. His distinguished career led him to be chosen Architect-in-Chief with C. Howard Walker for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha in 1898. He also acted as professional advisor to the Nebraska State Capitol Commission (1919-32) and is credited with the writing of that progressive competition. He was elected a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects in 1909 and served as A.I.A. National President from 1918-20.

Among Kimball's distinctive buildings are several which have become major Nebraska Landmarks. Perhaps most notable among these are the Omaha Public Library (1891-94), St. Cecelia's Cathedral (1905-59) and the Burlington Station (1896), all in Omaha, and the Hall County Courthouse (1901-04) in Grand Island, all listed in the National Register.

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Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 2

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