

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 24 1978

DATE ENTERED OCT 2 1978

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 STERICK BUILDING

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 8 NORTH THIRD STREET

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN MEMPHIS VICINITY OF 8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE TENNESSEE CODE 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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input 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 UNITED PROPERTY RESOURCES INC.

STREET & NUMBER SUITE 1500, 109 NORTH AKARD

CITY, TOWN DALLAS VICINITY OF TEXAS STATE 75201

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. SHELBY COUNTY REGISTER

STREET & NUMBER SHELBY COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, 160 N. MAIN STREET

CITY, TOWN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38103 STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

DATE APRIL 1978 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

CITY, TOWN Nashville STATE Tennessee

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

The Sterick Building, which stands at the northeast corner of Third and Madison Avenue in downtown Memphis, was built as a joint venture by prominent Texas Governor-oil man-publisher R.E. Sterling and his son-in-law, architect Wyatt C. Hedrick. Completed in 1929, the twenty-nine story skyscraper became the tallest structure in West Tennessee at a height of 347'6" and was the second largest office building in the South with over 200,000 square feet total area. It was built at a cost of \$2,500,000. It is architecturally significant because of its sensitive design combining great mass with human scale and elegant ornamentation and also because of its forceful domination of the strategic corner site.

Even though the Sterick Building has been surpassed in height in recent years by more modern buildings, it still dramatically marks the Third and Madison intersection with its enormous massing accomplished by a series of tiered setbacks typical of the Commercial Gothic style. These setbacks which occur at the roof levels of the 13th, 18th, and 22nd stories, create a powerful image reminiscent of a craggy mountain peak. Originally such setbacks were mandated by zoning laws designed to allow adequate air and sunshine to penetrate to the sidewalk below.

The building, which turns its broad side to Third Street, is U-shaped in plan up to the 13th floor level where it then becomes a slender two-tiered tower. This U-shaped plan, opening to the east, affords light and fresh air to interior office spaces. The long axis of the tower runs north and south parallel to Third Street thus enabling the views to the Mississippi River and to east Memphis to be maximized. This orientation also gives the building a greater sense of mass when seen on the skyline from the river on the west or from the principal suburban areas to the east.

This image of massive volume and bulk begins with the 13-story base, measuring approximately 148' by 148'. Rising out of this base is the 16-story tower which steps back $\frac{1}{2}$ bay at the 18th floor and 1 bay at the 22nd floor. At the top floor the final cornice was originally crowned with Gothic finials which have since been removed. The tower is topped by a mansard roof of green terra cotta tile, now painted white and adorned with a tenant's red logo. At the top of the mansard roof is an ornamental copper crest, also painted white.

A strong sense of structural hierarchy is expressed in the facades where the columns continue from the sidewalk to the various setback parapets where they are topped by finials. Between the columns are more delicate vertical mullions which add a human scale to the building while at the same time dividing the structural bays, and thereby emphasizing the verticality of the facade. These strong vertical elements, which interrupt the horizontal spandrel panels, thus afford a dominant vertical aspect to the massive proportions of the facades.

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The Third and Madison ground level base course of polished Minnesota granite gives way to Indiana limestone extending to the third floor. The remaining 26 stories are sheathed in an artificial stone manufactured locally. The original color of the Sterick Building was the light grey of this stone. At a later date the entire facade was coated with a waterproofing material, followed by a coat of white paint. It is this dark grey waterproofing which is now visible in places beneath the peeling white paint. The north and east facades, except for one bay each at the northwest and southeast corners, are clad in buff-colored brick masonry with projected headers. At the top of the first floor is the first of many cornices expressing the ground floor commercial rental space. Between the columns are large rounded flat-arched plate glass windows.

The main entrance is on Third Street where a two-story high polished granite portal, set forward for emphasis, affords entrance to the lobby. Made of the same granite as the base course, it consists of an arched opening topped by an ornamented stone lunette, above aluminum swinging doors and a flat soffit, added in a remodeling. On the sides of the doors are small decorative panels which in pattern resemble the much larger spandrels of the upper stories. On either side of the main entrance at the top of the arched portal are carved granite art deco pinnacles.

Above the second story is a second cornice where the columns terminate in an ornamental bourse. The ornamentation of this cornice consists of fleurs-de-lis and heraldic devices. Between the floors are ornamented stone spandrel panels which are interrupted by the continuous vertical mullions and columns.

The Madison Avenue facade features a smaller version of the granite portal on Third Street and originally had leaded glass in-fill in the lunette. Immediately east of this entrance is a pedimented Corinthian Renaissance revival entrance which was added at a later date. This portal opens into commercial space currently leased by the Commerce Union Bank. The east and north sides of the building are bounded by alleys with a fifth floor level walkway over the north alley connecting the Sterick Building with an adjacent parking garage.

The main lobby is designed on a cruciform plan with the primary entrance on Third Street, a connection to the Madison entrance

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by a sloping arcade and a small entrance on the north from the alley. The lobby detailing was originally of Renaissance style with blended pink Italian and Black Belgian marble walls and floors, vaulted corridor ceilings, and intricate chandeliers. A remodeling of the lobby and entrances introduced the existing coral red, black with red, and solid black marble. In addition, a suspended ceiling was added and the original chandeliers removed. The entrance lobby floor features a geometric maze pattern in black and pink marble and pink granite. Other details of note in the lobby include a solid brass mail box and intricate stair rails to the second floor, decorated with cast iron cupids. Off the lobby are two banks of four Otis Automatic Signal Control with the original bronze doors intact. These were the first signal control elevators in Memphis and were the fastest elevators in the city with a speed of 900 feet/minute. Four of these elevators rise only to the 13th floor, the other four continuing to the 29th floor.

There are two basement floors which house maintenance and mechanical equipment including three original Kewanee Portable boilers and the original air compressor. There is also a small parking garage. Other original mechanical equipment included a water well, a complete filtering plant, an ice-making and refrigerating plant, a high pressure fire pump, iced water delivery system for each floor, and an automatic airiator for purifying water.

The typical office floor of the first 13 stories is U-shaped with a central core containing elevators, toilet rooms, and other service facilities. Special features of the building included a barber shop, ladies lounge complete with showers, and a law library for Sterick tenants. Detailing on the floors above ground level included wainscoting of pink marble with red granite trim, terrazzo floors, elegant art deco water fountains, plaster lath ceilings and brass hardware with Gothic ornamentation. The original 879 offices were all finished in quarter-sawed white oak with office partitions of plaster and obscure glass, ceiling fans and Venetian blinds. Originally each typical office occupied one structural bay so that the structural bays of the facade expressed the office spaces within. The structure of the Sterick Building is steel, encased in concrete for fireproofing, with massive concrete footings which are visible in the basement. Radiators heat all but the 13th floor which has electric heat.

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 1928

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Wyatt C. Hedrick, Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sterick Building, for over thirty years Memphis' tallest building, has long punctuated the downtown skyline with its soaring Gothic tower. In 1928 construction began on the 29 story skyscraper. Upon its completion in 1929, it became the tallest structure in West Tennessee and the second largest office building in the South. Its architectural significance lies in its massive scale, strong vertical emphasis, and dominating presence on the Memphis skyline. It represents a prime example of the Commercial Gothic style. For its entire fifty year history the Sterick Building has provided headquarters for many of the city's most prominent business, professional, and governmental leaders.

Referred to in 1929 as one of the "Seven Wonders of Memphis," the Sterick Building was a joint venture of two Texans, Ross E. Sterling of Houston, and his son-in-law, architect Wyatt C. Hedrick of Fort Worth. Sterling was a former Governor of Texas, owner-publisher of the Houston-Post Dispatch, and Chairman of the Board of Humble Oil and Refining Company. It was his financial support which made possible the realization of Hedrick's dream for the new \$2,500,000 skyscraper. The name "Sterick" was derived from a combination of the two names, "Sterling" and "Hedrick." Among Hedrick's other projects were the Hospital for the Insane at Bolivar, Tennessee, and the Merchants' Bank and Trust Company in Jackson, Mississippi.

Commanding the northeast corner of Third Street and Madison Avenue, the Sterick Building occupies the former site of the elegant Napoleon Hill home. This strategic location is important as the eastern anchor of the Madison Avenue financial district. The building acts as a kind of urban lighthouse guiding the approach to the downtown area from East Memphis along Madison and along Third (Highway 51) from the Mississippi Delta to the south. Stylistically its design was no doubt influenced by the drawings of such visionaries as Hugh Ferriss, who perceived the skyscraper of the 1920's as a rival of nature in terms of scale and mass. The building presents a massive facade with its cliff-like setbacks reminiscent of a craggy mountain peak. With its massive piers and thin continuous window mullions the building's vertical emphasis becomes dominant. At the same time, however, the facades retain a distinct human scale through the delicate detailing and carved stone ornamentation.

Sterick Building tenants through the years have included many prominent local doctors, dentists and lawyers, as well as virtually all Departments of the Federal Government, including the U.S. District Court. Among its other tenants have been the Hunter Fan and Motor Co., Western Union Telegraph Co., HumKo Co., and LaSalle Extension University.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Sterick Building Is Opened to the Public," The Commercial Appeal, March 6, 1930.

"Shows Architect's Faith in Memphis", Peabody Hylites, November 17, 1929

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5

QUADRANGLE NAME Northwest Memphis, Tenn.-Ark. QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 768790 3892870

B

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H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue & North Third Street, extending north along Third Street 148 feet, then east along an alley 149 feet, then south along another alley 148 feet, then west along Madison Avenue 149 feet to the starting point.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James F. Williamson Jr. DATE April 3, 1978

ORGANIZATION James F. Williamson Jr., Architect DATE

STREET & NUMBER 2004 Lincoln American Tower TELEPHONE (901) 526-2800

CITY OR TOWN Memphis, Tennessee 38103 STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

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 Herbert E. Hays DATE 7/18/78

TITLE Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10/2/78

ATTEST: William Lebonch DATE Sept 30, 1978

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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"Sterick Building Equipped with Costly Machinery," The Press Scimitar, July 23, 1931.

"Sterick Building Leads South in Cost Per Foot," The Press Scimitar, July 30, 1931.

"U-U-U-P! City's Fastest Elevators Race 900 Feet a Minute With Girls as Pilots," The Commercial Appeal, August 19, 1931.

"Memphis' Biggest Building Slated for Sale at Auction," The Evening Appeal, August 27, 1932.

"No, It's Not a Shower; It's an 'Airiater'", The Sterick News, June, 1930

"Sterick Building to Be Sold at Auction," The Commercial Appeal, August 28, 1932.

"The Sterick Building Memphis' New Modern Office Building," The Sterick News, February, 1930.

"Finds 'Paradise' in Sterick Building," The Press Scimitar, February 6, 1930.

"Sterling Gets First View of Skyscraper," The Commercial Appeal, August 27, 1929.

"The Seven Wonders of Memphis," by Ridley Wills, The Evening Appeal, July 8, 1929.

"Skyscraper is 2nd Largest," The Press Scimitar, July 4, 1929.

"1954 Carloads of Materials Enter New Sterick Skyscraper," The Commercial Appeal, May 5, 1929.

Hedrick, Wyatt C., Inc., Architects, Fort Worth, Texas, "Sterick Building, Memphis, Tennessee, Third and Madison Co.," architectural working drawings, October 6, 1928.