

DATA SHEET

PH 0675334

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

APR 13 1979

DATE ENTERED

APR 24 1979

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

The Lamar Building (Southern Finance Building)

AND/OR COMMON

Southern Finance Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

753 Broad Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Augusta

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Georgia

VICINITY OF

10th - Rep. Barnard

CODE

13

COUNTY

Richmond

CODE

245

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Robert L. Robinson, vice president for mortgage loans
Life Insurance Company of Georgia

STREET & NUMBER

Life of Georgia Tower, 600 West Peachtree Street

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia 30308

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Augusta-Richmond County Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

564 Greene Street

CITY, TOWN

Augusta

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Structures Field Survey: Richmond County, Ga.

DATE

1977

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Preservation Section, Ga. Dept. of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

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 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 Southern Finance Building (the Lamar Building) is a sixteen-floor, steel-frame, brick-and-concrete building. It conforms to the basic arrangement of early-twentieth-century multi-storied office buildings or skyscrapers. It is a large, vertical column with a two-story base and a fourteen-story shaft with setbacks capped by an ornate cornice. The mode of finishing the cornice was altered in 1975 when the original red-tile hipped roof was replaced by a contemporary-design executive suite.

The base portion of the building draws its main character from the four two-story Tuscan columns of Vermont granite which support a central portico. The powerful front facade rises fourteen floors above this portico (unabated by setbacks). Hanging from the portico ceiling are three six-sided lamps. On either side of this central portico are two double-story window openings rising to segmented arches. In these openings, spandrels with central shield-like Baroque emblems separate the first- and second-floor windows. The columns and arches support a broad entablature and a concrete cornice decorated with dentil molding. Also, low-relief panels with classic urn designs define the quoins at either end of the frieze. Above each of the four central columns is a freestanding concrete ornament with four tiers of acanthus leaves.

The cornice of the base, with the aid of a weighty third story and its own smaller cornice, becomes the foundation for the building's shaft. The weight of the third story is partly effected by low-relief panels between each window of the story. These panels incorporate a Greek urn with the shield-like emblem and the applied letter "L" at its center. Also, the two low-relief representations of terminal figures are located at the corners of the third floor.

Above this base is the fourteen-story shaft. Each floor has identical single-pane-sash, double-hung windows. Between each floor is a spandrel with relief molding in the shape of a rectangle. Centered in each spandrel panel is a diamond etched with a quatrefoil.

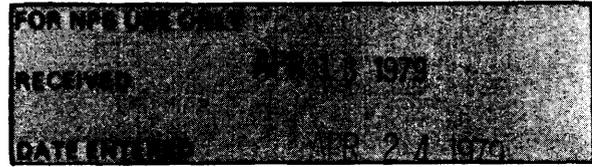
Bold, high-relief, rounded molding divides the evenhanded front facade fenestration into vertical window groups of two. Each vertical group ends with a rounded, arched window echoed by the encompassing rounded end of the vertical molding.

The honeycomb-like shaft rises ten stories above the second floor before this block has a setback. Above this, in the top four stories, only the three central paired window groupings continue upward in the form of a central tower. The symmetrical setbacks have decorative friezes below shouldered parapets with bold, shield-like emblems at their centers. Above each emblem is

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

the freestanding, molded head of a mythological figure. Minor setbacks above these major setbacks are attached to the main shaft of the building with parapet walls in the form of volutes or inverted consoles.

The main tower shaft ends above the sixteenth floor with a bold terra cotta cornice. The eave has low-relief brackets on a sky-blue background. The cornice fascia has a repetitive system of yellow sphere motifs alternated with larger, light-green, egg-like motifs. The cornice is surmounted by a bold, continuous parapet with evenly-spaced antefixae.

The contemporary penthouse consists of two slabs of concrete on parallel planes approximately ten feet apart. Between the slabs is a suspended block consisting of a steel shell sheeted with glass. It represents one lofty story of office space. Two smaller blocks are cantilevered on the outside of each slab and have glass portions angling from the outside edge of each block nearly to the top of the slabs.

The east and west facades or sides of the main building are arranged as three vertical rows of windows: a group of three, then two, then another group of two. These groups are connected by bold, vertical rows of rusticated concrete which surrounds rectangular sections of buff brick.

Another block, twelve stories high and three bays deep, is positioned centrally behind the main block. Its facades are entirely of buff brick without any further ornamentation. The flat roof of this rear block has served as a helicopter landing platform.

The interior of the building is simple, compared to its exterior. Each floor has a central hall serviced by three central elevators. The hall ends in an office suite on the north and, on the south, forms a "T" with a suite at either end. The ceilings are twelve feet high on floors one and two, and nine feet high on every floor above. Each office door has a large upper pane of translucent glass and an overhead transom of identical material.

A cross, formerly lighted twenty-four hours a day, sits on top of the penthouse. It is thirty-six feet high, seventeen feet wide, and weighs 4,700 pounds.

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 1913-1918; 1975

~~BUILDER~~/ARCHITECT

W.L. Stoddard of New York; G. Lloyd Preacher of Augusta; I.M. Pe

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Southern Finance Building draws significance from its position as: (1) one of the first "modern" office buildings in Augusta; (2) a point of reference as well as survivor of Augusta's great fire of 1916; (3) a building associated with the leading local architect and a leading Augusta lawyer who became a Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and (4) a building whose contemporary penthouse office designed by an internationally-known architectural firm symbolizes the aspirations of a group of Augusta's most important recent businessmen.

The Southern Finance Building (The Lamar Building)

In 1913, the Empire Life Insurance Company of Atlanta, Georgia, purchased several parcels of land on the north side of Broad Street between McIntosh (7th) and Jackson (8th) streets. The company intended to build an office building and locate a Southern headquarters in the new building [the company's main headquarters was located in Atlanta in another large office building]. Augusta's municipal and economic growth prior to 1913 seemed impressive: the textile mills built along the Augusta Canal in the 1880s were still flourishing; commercial and industrial boosterism was a potent factor in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century; a levee had been built in 1909 to protect downtown from flooding; and Augusta was becoming nationally-known as a winter vacation oasis as symbolized by visits of President William H. Taft in 1908, 1909 and after his departure from office in 1912.

Work on the Empire Life Insurance Company building began in late 1913 under the direction of the Whitney Company of New York, general contractors, with G. Lloyd Preacher of Augusta and W.L. Stoddard of New York as associated architects. It is probable that Stoddard is responsible for most of the building's design, and certainly the structural specifications. But Preacher was on the scene, responsible for execution, and perhaps he added the Baroque embellishments which were common to the resort architecture popular in Augusta during this period.

By July of 1915, it became apparent to the Empire Life's contractors and sub-contractors in Augusta that their compensation was in danger. The life-

[continued]

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Augusta Chronicle. File on building in newspaper's library.
 Billman, Calvin J. "The 1916 Augusta Fire: An Unnecessary Tragedy," Richmond County History, Vol. VII, No. 2 (Summer, 1975).
 Haltermann, Bryan M., personal inspection.

[continued]

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY app. 1/4 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Augusta East

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,7 4,1,0,3,2,5 3,7,10,4,1,9,5

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that lot with improvements beginning at a point which is located 58.76 feet easterly from the northeast corner of the intersection of Eighth Street and Broad Street and running from said point north 20 degrees 58 minutes [continued]

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE 1. Bryan M. Haltermann, consultant
2. Richard R. Cloues, architectural historian

ORGANIZATION 1. Historic Augusta, Inc. DATE 1/31/79
2. Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources

STREET & NUMBER 1. 629 Greene St. TELEPHONE 1. 724-2324
2. 270 Washington St., S.W. 2. 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN 1. Augusta STATE Georgia
2. Atlanta

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

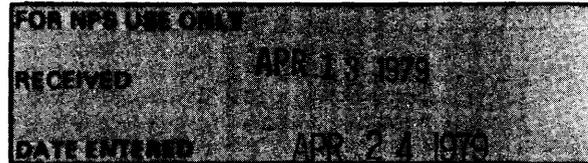
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Elizabeth A. Lyon
 TITLE Acting State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 4/13/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>4/24/79</u>
ATTEST: <u>William Stutz</u>	DATE <u>April 24, 1979</u>
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

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insurance company was nearing financial disaster which, after bankruptcy, led to the liquidation of the company assets through the State Insurance Commissioner in 1916. The list of material man's liens recorded in the Richmond County Realty books reveals details of the sub-contractors and materials used in this early phase of construction.

In October of 1915, however, the financially-troubled insurance company made arrangements to finish their Augusta construction project. The plan focused on a St. Louis insurance company re-insuring all of Empire's outstanding policies as well as a loan of \$180,000, to complete the office building in Augusta.

An expedient completion of the building was never made, for on the night of March 22, 1916, a fire began in an office building on the northwest corner of Broad and Jackson (8th) Street. With the help of a strong breeze and inadequate pressure, the fire spread. The Empire Life Building, the Chronicle Building and, in all, thirty-two blocks of downtown commercial and residential structures were burned.

A fireman who was one of the first on the scene recalled fifty-nine years later:

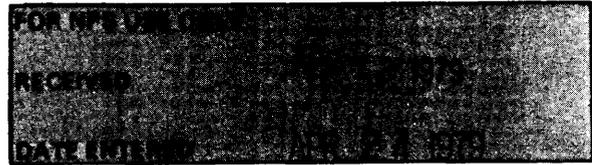
The wind was very, very brisk . . . and it wasn't too long before it jumped over Eighth Street and onto the Lamar Building [later name for Empire Life's building] . . . the wind was blowing so hard and the fire so intensely warm until it melted the windows in this huge building . . . the wind . . . blew it [the glass] out onto the Broad Street pavement . . . thousands of molten glass [pieces] looked like stars jumping up from the ground.

The estimated damage for the partially-burned building was \$200,000, and on March 23rd, the vice president of the Whitney Company, T. Eckford Rhodes, came to Augusta from New York to survey the damage. New York papers had reported that the building was condemned and required complete remodeling. Rhodes quickly squashed that rumor and commented that the fire had served one unexpected purpose: it created the opportunity for either the Empire or Chronicle Building owners to rebuild as a hotel if one or the other felt that

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two large office buildings was one too many for the town of only 45,000 residents.

In November, an order by the Fulton County Superior Court required the State Insurance Commissioner to advertise and sell the burned building. The sale occurred in December, when the major creditors (the Georgia Railroad Bank, the Whitney Company, the Otis Elevator Company, and the Merchants Bank) bought the building for \$115,000. This group immediately sold it to a number of local businessmen organized as the Augusta Building Company.

The new owners were headed by real-estate brokers Hugh H. Alexander and Henry B. Garrett, who were later to form the Southern Finance Corporation. This company mainly concerned itself with loans, mortgages, and insurance.

The building was finally finished and opened for use in 1918. By this time, the building was known as the Lamar Building in honor of the late Joseph Rucker Lamar.

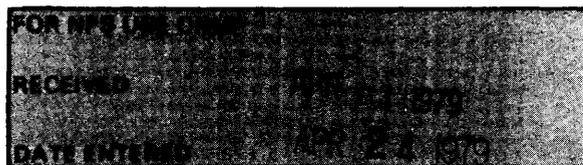
The Lamar Building became the Southern Finance Building in 1925 after that corporation's formation. In the late 1920s, a short flagpole centered on the building's roof flew a banner with a large "SFC" emblazoned across it.

Since its completion in 1918, the Southern Finance Building (the Lamar Building) has been the most prominent office building in downtown Augusta, and the virtual hub of local commercial and financial activities. Whether the Southern Financial Building was Augusta's first modern office building is debatable, for the ten-story Chronicle Building (now the Marion Building) was built during the same span of years. Both buildings, due to individual financial needs and the Augusta fire of 1916, were built over several years. The two, however, can be considered the local pioneers of modern office buildings whose fireproof characteristics cause them to stand today. With special regard to the Southern Finance Building, it can be said that its steel frame, reinforced with concrete and sheathed with stone, brick and glass, and its overall form of base, tower and cornice, derive from Louis Sullivan's formula for tall buildings as developed by the Chicago School of Architecture in the late-nineteenth century. Its Baroque detailing and its setbacks, however, clearly identify the building as an early-twentieth-century manifestation of the skyscraper movement. One of only two such skyscrapers in Augusta, it is the taller and perhaps the finer of the two.

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G. Lloyd Preacher, Architect

G. Lloyd Preacher, architect associated with the Southern Financial Building (the Lamar Building), was one of the leading architects in Augusta and in Georgia in the second two decades of the twentieth century. He was born in Fairfax, S.C., and educated at Clemson University. Before he opened his own firm around 1909, Preacher worked as a draftsman at the Lombard Iron Works. At one time, Philander Scroggs, Willis Irvin, Charles Thompson, and Whitney Ewing, all well-known regional architects at a later date, trained in Preacher's Augusta office. Soon after his work for the Empire Life Insurance Company, Preacher and three other Georgia architects were commissioned by the governor to form the first State Examining Board for registering architects. In 1924, Preacher changed his residence to Atlanta but maintained offices in Miami, Birmingham, and Augusta as well. His firm did a large volume of business in the Southeast. At the same time, the firm worked on the design for the Atlanta City Hall and thirty-four individual Atlanta schools.

Joseph Rucker Lamar, Lawyer

Joseph Rucker Lamar was a successful and popular Augusta lawyer who died two months before the 1916 fire. He served as State Senator, 1886-1889; as Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, 1903-1905; and as United States Supreme Court Justice, 1911-1916. Lamar was appointed to this last position by frequent Augusta visitor William H. Taft. The building's 1918 commemoration was logical in that Lamar was a well-known proponent of local business. He served as president of Augusta's Young Men's Business League, gave the major address at many local, commercial expositions, and generally was known as a railroad lawyer.

Eugene Holley and the I.M. Pei Penthouse

In 1973, three Augusta businessmen -- Charles Beck, Donald Ford and Eugene Holley-- bought the Southern Finance Building and made it a major component in their plan to revitalize Augusta's downtown business district.

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Holley had achieved abundant success as a lawyer, businessman and politician. He chaired the State Senate Banking and Finance Committee from 1969 to 1976 and, in 1973, began reaping substantial profits from investments in Texas oil wells. In May of 1973, Holley and his two law partners, Bertrand Hester and former Governor Carl Sanders, announced a plan to renovate a delapidated hotel and to construct a modern, multi-storied hotel nearby on Broad Street. Holley's success and his dramatic plans for downtown Augusta were symbolized by the construction of the penthouse on top of the Southern Finance Building in 1975. The new addition was judged only in superlatives by local residents.

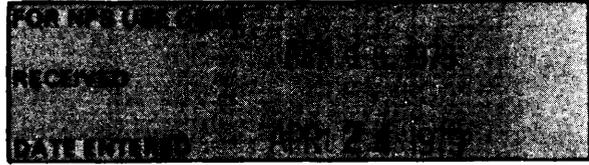
The glass-, concrete-and-marble structure cost about \$500,000 and was designed by I.M. Pei and Partners of New York, an internationally-known firm currently receiving both public and critical acclaim. Pei, who came to Augusta to have his photograph taken with Holley during construction of the penthouse, was born in Canton, China, in 1917. He received his architectural education at Harvard, M.I.T., and the University of Pennsylvania, and has practiced with his present firm since 1955. Pei has been the architect for many of the country's most heralded public and corporate structures during the past twenty years. In addition to this penthouse, Pei designed the Broad Street Mall in Augusta, onto which the Southern Finance Building fronts.

On December 29, 1975, Holley announced that a large cross would be mounted on top of his recently-completed penthouse "as a Christmas present for Jesus." The cross, actually installed in January of 1976, symbolizes Holley's evangelical, fundamentalist Protestantism.

In May of 1978, after Holley's financial troubles caused delinquency on mortgage payments and foreclosure, the Life Insurance Company of Georgia, holder of the building's first mortgage, bought the Southern Finance Building for \$800,000.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Johnson, H.H. Oral Memoirs of Augusta's Citizens (Augusta, 1975).

Lamar, Clarinda P. The Life of Joseph Rucker Lamar, 1857-1916 (New York, 1926).

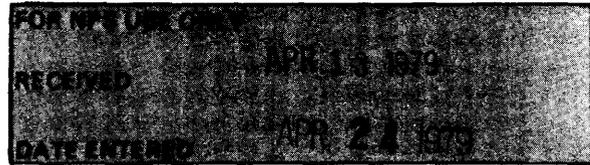
Richmond County Realty books.

W.P.A. Augusta (Augusta, 1938).

Atlanta Journal and Constitution, June 26, 1977, pp. 1, 12. "Gene Holley
Struggles to Keep His Financial Empire Intact."

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CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

east for a distance of 133.6 feet to a point; thence turning and running north 68 degrees 11 minutes east for a distance of 11.7 feet to a point; thence turning and running north 21 degrees 23 minutes east for a distance of 5.8 feet to a point; thence turning and running south 69 degrees 32 minutes east for a distance of 64.7 feet to a point; thence turning and running north 20 degrees 57 minutes east for a distance of 60.6 feet to a point; thence turning and running south 69 degrees 42 minutes east for a distance of 10 feet to a point; thence turning and running south 20 degrees 36 minutes west for a distance of 209.3 feet to a point on the northernmost right-of-way line of Broad Street; thence turning and running north 69 degrees 30 minutes west for a distance of 83.2 feet to a point of beginning. This boundary is described by a heavy black line on the attached "Plat of Property" dated 1961. This boundary replicates the legal description of this property.