

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

For NPS use only  
received JL 28 1983  
date entered  
RECEIVED

FEB 02 1983 *Fernal*

1. Name

OHP

historic National Carbon Company Building

and/or common Blake, Moffitt and Towne Warehouse

2. Location

street & number 599 <sup>8th</sup> ~~Eighth~~ Street

N/A not for publication

city, town San Francisco

N/A vicinity of

~~Congressional district~~

state California

code 06

county San Francisco

code 075

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Buchanan Street Associates, A General Partnership

street & number 3701 Buchanan Street

city, town San Francisco

N/A vicinity of

state California 94123

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. San Francisco Recorder's Office

street & number Room 167, San Francisco City Hall

city, town San Francisco

state California 94102

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

(Tax Act Certification Part 1, 11-16-82)

title Splendid Survivors (secondary area) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Heritage, 2007 Franklin Street

city, town San Francisco

state CA

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input 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			N/A

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

The National Carbon Co. Building is a large-scale reinforced concrete industrial structure overlaid with classical details. From the street, only the four-story elevations at Eighth and Brannan Streets are visible. In plan view, the structure is seen as a complex of buildings built around an open courtyard. The original 1917 building facing Eighth Street is four stories with a small fifth story section at its northern end. The circa 1920 addition includes: a four-story, nine-bay extension of the Brannan Street elevation; a four-story structure at the east elevation and a one-story structure with clerestory at the northeast corner of the complex. The later portions were designed by the original architect to match the earlier building and are not evident as later additions. The street elevations have experienced relatively few alterations and retain much of their original integrity. The building's interior has been used largely as an unfinished storage space and has little architectural or historical significance.

The two principal elevations at Eighth and Brannan Streets are nearly identical. The Eighth Street facade is fifteen bays long with full-size wired windows in each bay and simple spandrel panels dividing the floor levels. The fourteen-bay Brannan Street elevation has three full-story vehicular entranceways at its center and a glass and aluminum doorway at the tenth bay from the corner which was added in 1968. At each end of these two elevations matching doorways with High Style classical detailing give the building a more formal appearance. The doorways are surrounded by a concrete architrave and topped by brackets and a pediment. Ornamentation above the doorways includes a shield with the initials "N C" and crossed flashlights. Above the fourth story windows a row of concrete medallions provide decoration and above that a parapet repeating the shape of the doorway pediments lines the top of the building. A square tower at the center of the roof of the Brannan Street elevation was added in 1917 to enclose the gravity tanks for the sprinkler system. These street elevations have been painted a beige or grey color throughout most of the building's history but were changed to a bright blue color in 1978.

The interior of the National Carbon Co. Building historically has been unfinished space used for storage so there is little to indicate the building's previous use by either the Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co. or the National Carbon Co. Exceptions are at the second floor where office partitions were added in the 1960s and at the fourth floor where a small office remains. Dating from the original construction, this room features wood paneling, built-in book shelves and a fireplace with marble mantel. It is in good condition.

When Blake, Moffitt and Towne moved out of the warehouse in 1981 the building was left vacant and unused. In 1982 the present owners began work on its conversion to a wholesale gift market. Plans call for few changes to the Eighth and Brannan Street elevations aside from minor repair of damaged surface areas and repainting of graphics at the cornice level. The vehicular doors on Brannan Street will be converted to a pedestrian entrance with recessed glass doorways. At the interior, the open courtyard will be covered by glass skylights and finished for use as an atrium/restaurant space. The storage areas on floors 1 through 5 will be finished for use as showrooms. The estimated date of completion for the project is Spring 1983.

## 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** 1917, c. 1920

**Builder/Architect** Maurice Couchot

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The National Carbon Co. Building is a major architectural example of the reinforced concrete industrial structures built in San Francisco in the early 20th century. Designed by prominent local architect/engineer Maurice Couchot and built in 1917, it clearly describes its period of construction. With its attention to practical considerations as well as aesthetics, it exhibits the ambiguity typical of the City Beautiful Movement popular in San Francisco at that time. Foremost, it is an industrial structure built with the latest technology and materials. It featured reinforced concrete construction, a sophisticated ventilation system, a sprinkler system and an intercommunications system of telephones, pneumatic tubes and spiral chutes. But on top of its industrial design Couchot applied oversize classical ornamentation such as High Style door surrounds, spandrel panels and medallions. These features, as well as its scale, distinguish the building and make it highly visible in its South of Market Street industrial neighborhood. Nearby industrial structures dating from the same era (1905 to 1930) are of brick or reinforced concrete construction. Although similar in function and construction, there are few that match the National Carbon Co. Building in scale or prominence.

The architect Maurice Couchot was well-qualified to design industrial structures. Born and educated in France, he moved to the United State and practised in California for twenty-five years before his death in 1933. An early advocate of reinforced concrete construction, he worked primarily as a consulting engineer but alone or in partnership designed a number of buildings in San Francisco. Local buildings for which he acted as consulting engineer include: Bank of Italy Building at Powell and Market Streets, Apartment Building at 615 Powell and the Fine Arts Building and French Building at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915. He also provided consulting services on the Senator Hotel in Sacramento and the Mercantile Arcade Building in Los Angeles. As an architect, he worked with Kenneth McDonald on the Francesca Apartments at 850 Powell and the Hotel Canterbury on Sutter Street.

The National Carbon Co. Building was commissioned by the Eveready Division of the National Carbon Co. Headquartered in Cleveland, this company grew rapidly after its organization in the late 1800s and became a unit of Union Carbide in 1917. The building at Eighth and Brannan illustrates the company's success in the manufacture of batteries and the necessity of constructing a large and imposing building. Built at a cost of \$400,000, the original portion measured 295 feet by 120 feet and housed about 500 employees. An addition dating from around 1920 doubled the building's size and increased the Brannan Street elevation from five to fourteen bays. In 1937 the original portion of the building was acquired by the Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co., an early San Francisco paper distributing company. The remainder of the building was occupied by the Phillips and Van Orden Printing Co. until the late 1950s when Blake, Moffitt and Towne took over the space. Blake, Moffitt and Towne utilized the complex as a headquarters office and warehouse until April 1981.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 2

Quadrangle name San Francisco North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	0	5	5	2	4	8	0	4	1	8	0	4	8	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** Property is a building roughly 300' x 300' at the northern corner of Brannan and Eighth Streets. Boundaries encompass the historic lot, described as City Lots 7 and 7A of Block 3780.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne B. Frej, Planning Consultant

organization Sugaya & Frej Planners

date January 1983

street & number 55 Sutter Street, #30

telephone 415-841-1830

city or town San Francisco

state CA 94104

# 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

*K m Ellen*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/29/83

For NPS use only

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

*J. Aurora Payne*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 8/25/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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

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

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 6 & 9

Page 1

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

San Francisco Department of City Planning Architectural Inventory  
1976 Local  
Department of City Planning, 450 McAllister, San Francisco, CA 94102

9. Major Bibliographical References

Owen, William. Interview, August 1982.

Pioneers in Paper: The Story of the Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co. San Francisco:  
Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co., 1930.

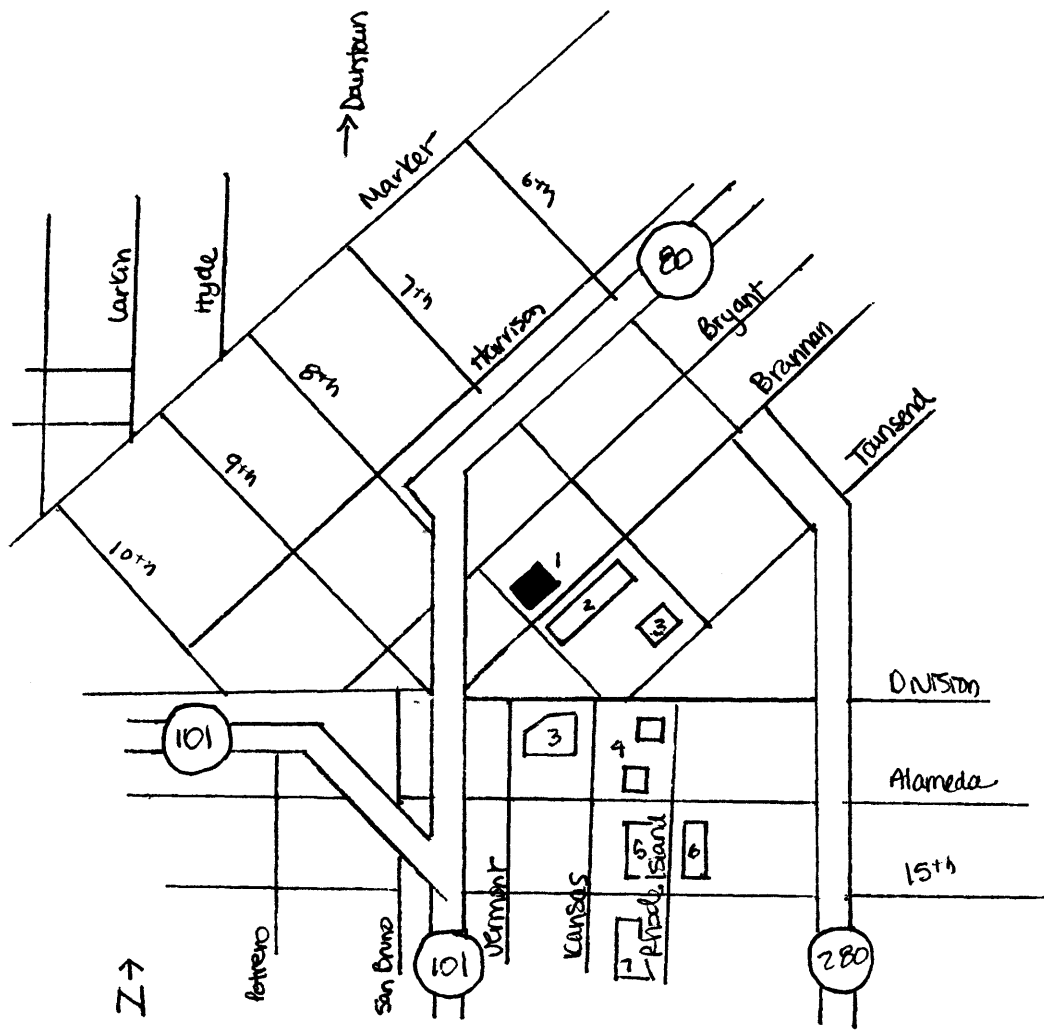
San Francisco Chronicle, 30 June 1933.

The Architect, September 1918.

The Architect and Engineer,  
April 1917  
October 1917  
May 1918  
March 1922  
July 1933

Wilson, Neill. Deep Roots: The History of Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co.  
San Francisco: Blake, Moffitt and Towne Co., 1955.

National Carbon Co. Building  
 599 Eighth Street  
 San Francisco, CA



- 1 National Carbon Co. Building
- 2 Trade Show Center
- 3 The Showplace
- 4 Garden Court
- 5 Galleria Design Center
- 6 Showplace Square East
- 7 Showplace Square South