

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

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

received **AUG 16 1985**

date entered **SEP 26 1985**

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

**1. Name**

historic Billington Building (one (1) contributing property)

and or common Masonic Temple

**2. Location**

street & number 23 East Ninth N/A not for publication

city, town Shawnee N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma code 40 county Pottawatomie code 125

**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 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 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	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<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 SRS Association of Shawnee

street & number Ninth and Bell, Room 420, 23 East 9th

city, town Shawnee N/A vicinity of state Oklahoma 74801

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of County Clerk

street & number Pottawatomie County Courthouse

city, town Shawnee state Oklahoma 74801

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office-Oklahoma Historical Society

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma 73105

## 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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Billington Building is a seven-story, flat roofed "U" plan skyscraper situated on the northwest corner of East Ninth and Bell streets. Its wall finish consists of smooth granite blocks on the ground and upper stories and polychromatic brick on the intermediate floors.

The east, west, and north sides of the building illustrate the early formula for high rise construction which divided a building into three parts: a two story base, an air shaft in which verticality was emphasized, and upper stories topped by projecting cornice.

The two ground floors on these three sides include large display window openings and business entryways. The east side has three such openings, two of which are transomed. The north side has twelve openings, five of which have been bricked in. The remaining seven have four entryways and three display windows. The west side has two large openings which have been bricked in. Six 2/2 double hung windows are located in second story base level of west side. Two other openings are located in first floor of ground levels, one of which is covered with louvered vent and the other is a 2/2 double-hung window. There are two wood panel doors in first floor of west side, one of which is double type.

The three intermediate floors of north, east, and west sides are dominated by bands of vertical windows. East intermediate floors have three bands with fourteen windows each, north has three bands of twenty-two each, and west has three bands of thirteen each. All of these windows are straight-topped openings with 1/1 double-hung windows. The only exception to the lintel-type opening is found on the third floor of the east side where four fixed paned windows are surrounded by 1/1 double-hung side lights and three paned transoms.

Fenestration for upper two stories in east, west, and north walls consists of fixed pane windows with numerous lights. The sixth floor has a band of twenty-light windows and the seventh floor has bands of twelve-light windows set below fan lights. The vertical nature of the fenestration of these two floors is emphasized by paired wall pilasters which flank the openings. The sixth and seventh floor window arrangements are separated by floriated spandrels. The only deviation from this window arrangement in the upper two stories on the three sides is on the west side where the polychromatic brick begins. There are no decorative elements separating the windows in the brick wall and one window opening has been deleted at the sixth floor level.

The rear, or south side of the building consists of five different wall planes, three constitute the inner walls and two outer walls facing the one-story parking garage across an alley from the nominated property. Fenestration of the inner three walls is similar to the east, west, and north sides except that no display windows exist at ground levels. The westernmost outer wall has three bands of four, 2/2 double-hung windows in floors three through five, no openings in sixth floor, and two round arched openings at seventh story level. The latter openings still contain the fan lights, however, the twelve pane portion has been covered with wood paneling. The easternmost outer wall fenestration consists of four, 2/2, double-hung windows in fourth floor; three, 2/2 double-hung windows in fifth floor; no openings in fifth floor; and four fan lights with wood paneling covering the twelve pane sections.

Decorative elements include the modestly projecting cornice with dentils on the north, east, and west sides; double wall pilasters and floriated spandrels at sixth and seventh floor levels of same sides; fan lights at seventh floor level; and the three-story smooth ashlar wall pilasters with ornamental capitals which frame the deeply-recessed entryways in the north side.

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Alterations occur primarily on the ground story levels and have been made during the last decade. They include replacement of original display windows in five openings on north side and two openings in west side with brick. The bricked openings, however, closely resemble the brick finish of intermediate floors. Minor changes include replacement of six pane transom on east side with metal paneling and replacement of twelve paned windows on upper story of rear outer walls with wood paneling.

These changes do not significantly detract from the overall architectural integrity of the Masonic Temple. The nominated property has retained its original character and design for more than 55 years.

Contributing Properties

One (1) contributing building

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1929-1935 **Builder/Architect** C. B. Billington

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Billington Building is both architecturally and historically significant because: (1) it was the first skyscraper constructed in Shawnee having been completed in 1929 and (2) it was the most important office building in the central business district of Shawnee during the peak production years of the Greater Seminole Oil Field, 1929-1935.

Prior to the oil boom era of the late 1920s, Shawnee was primarily a center for Shawnee Indian activities and a railroad shipping/receiving point. The Shawnee Indian Agency, Shawnee Sanitorium, and the Shawnee Mission were located in or near the town. The townsite was platted in 1892 and, during the next ten years, three railroads laid tracks through the community. The Rock Island and Santa Fe Railroad Companies located shops in Shawnee and more than 1,000 people were employed by the railroads during the period following statehood in 1907. By 1920, Shawnee's population had reached 15,384 and was one of the largest cities in central Oklahoma.

The discovery of petroleum near Shawnee in the mid-1920s sent the city to heights of unprecedented prosperity, and its population more than doubled to over 35,000 within a three year period. Shawnee became the principal urban center in the Greater Seminole Oil Field. The Seminole Field had six major producing pools, and during its peak production years of 1926-1936, 702,157,800 barrels of petroleum were produced in the area. That amount represented almost 20 percent of all the oil being produced in Oklahoma. The value of petroleum produced during this era was estimated at \$1,009,966,794.

The economic life of the Greater Seminole Field was abruptly changed from one based primarily on agriculture to petroleum. Because of increased petroleum activity, in-migration of thousands of people, and increased wealth, Shawnee's urban functions also had to change rapidly because it became the major beneficiary of much of this change. Transportation systems had to be developed, oil field supply houses organized, new businesses established and old ones expanded, and housing for the hordes of individuals, both professional and non-professional, moving to Shawnee had to be built. Rig builders, truckers, pipeliners, tool pushers, and roughnecks came. Professionals such as geologists, attorneys, physicians, and teachers were needed to serve the throngs rushing to the area.

By the late 1920s, Shawnee sorely needed additional office space to accommodate the rapidly growing petroleum business and petroleum-related services such as geologists, attorneys, and land appraisers. C.B. Billington was a successful hardware dealer in the small town of Maud, center of one of the major discoveries of the Seminole Field. Prior to the oil boom, Billington had acquired considerable land-holdings around Maud and, when the oil boom began, he immediately profited from the royalties from the oil discovered on his land.

Billington followed the trend of many of those who lived in small towns and rural sections of the Seminole Field. In the late 1920s, he moved to the big city of Shawnee, built a fine home with his money, and began to take an active role in the economic development of the community. He was quick to determine that Shawnee needed more office space in the downtown area and financed the construction of the first skyscraper office building; which would not only house his royalty company, but also provide space for the petroleum-related businesses which had emerged in the city. An active member of the Masons, Billington designed the skyscraper so that the top two floors of the seven-story structure would serve as meeting space for the Shawnee Masonic Lodge.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Personal Interview: Judge J. Knox Byrum, January, 1985  
Ross Porter, July, 1984  
Mrs. William Dougherty, December, 1984

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Shawnee, OK

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	4	6	8	7	8	5	0	3	9	1	1	2	5	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

Lots 1-4, Block 25, AP Addition of Shawnee

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

state N/A code  county  code

state  code  county  code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bryan Brown, Supervised by Dr. George O. Carney

organization Department of Geography

date January 1985

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone 405-624-6250

city or town Stillwater

state Oklahoma 74078

## 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 C Eusealy

7/30/85

title

date

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

William B. Burkhong  
for Keeper of the National Register

date 9/26/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Completed in 1929 at an estimated cost of \$300,000, the Billington Building/Masonic Temple followed the early formula for highrise construction of three zones: a base of one to two stories, intermediate floors devoted to office space, and upper stories crowned with a projecting cornice. The nominated property reflects the early skyscraper characteristics developed by the Chicago School of Skyscraper Architects. It was more than five stories but less than twenty, rectangular-shaped with flat roof, and possessed a terminating cornice.

For more than 55 years, the Billington Building/Masonic Temple has played a vital role in the commercial and social history of Shawnee. Still housing a variety of commercial and professional enterprises, the nominated property retains its historic integrity. Upon Billington's death in 1940, the upper two stories were donated to the Masonic Lodge of Shawnee which still uses the space for lodge meetings and social functions.