

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 3 1987

date entered SEP 17 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Miller Brothers Department Store

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 629 Market Street N/A not for publication

city, town Chattanooga N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Hamilton code 065

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input 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 Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Tennessee

street & number 801 Pine Street

city, town Chattanooga N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37402

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hamilton County Courthouse

street & number Georgia Avenue

city, town Chattanooga state Tennessee

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle Hamilton County Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes nodate 1976, 1979 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

Historical Development

The Miller Brothers Department Store is a complex of five buildings located in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. This complex of buildings was constructed at the turn of the century and was the home of the Miller Brothers Department store, one of the leading mercantile businesses of Chattanooga in the 20th century. The complex is located in the 600 block of both Market and Broad Streets and fronts on both these streets and Seventh Avenue. The complex extends 185' along Broad and Market Streets and 200' along Seventh Avenue.

The Miller Brothers Company occupied several locations in Chattanooga before purchasing this lot in 1897. The lot was the site of the Richardson Building, a substantial six story brick building, which was destroyed by fire on April 3, 1897. The remnants of the Richardson Building was razed and the Miller Brothers' four story brick building was soon erected (Building 1). The architect for this building was Reuben H. Hunt who was a prominent Chattanooga architect.

The design for the building was in keeping with the Victorian Romanesque style. It originally featured display windows and brick piers on the storefront and large arched and rectangular windows, brick corbelling and a sheet metal cornice on the upper facade. The building extended from Market to Broad Streets along Seventh Avenue and measured 110' by 200'. Upon its completion it was one of the largest stores in the city.

As the business grew in the early 1900s the company purchased the adjoining lots directly to the north of their original building. On the west 90' lot they acquired or constructed a four story building extending 50' along Market Street (Building 2). This building was constructed between 1898 and 1900 and is shown on the Sanborn map of the city in 1901. This building had cast iron pilasters on the storefront and rectangular windows and corbelled brickwork on the upper facade. In 1906, the company purchased two existing two story buildings directly adjacent to the northeast at 625 and 627 Market Street. The company added two more stories to the buildings and totally changed the facade (Building 3). This facade was designed in exact imitation of their original building next door (Building 1).

By the mid-1920s the buildings had been altered with the addition of terra cotta cladding on the first story. The Market Street and Seventh Avenue facades appear to have had this terra cotta added around 1915 and this design was extended along Broad Street in 1926. The terra cotta was a cream color with a smooth slip glaze and covered most of the storefront, brick piers and belt course between the first and second stories.

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Expansion of the company continued over the next decade and in 1917 the company purchased the adjacent building and lot to the northwest of their property. This consisted of an existing four story brick building facing 25' along both Broad Street (Building 4). This building was constructed ca. 1895 with cast iron pilasters and simple brick decoration and rectangular windows on the upper facade. In 1916 the company purchased the three story brick ca. 1888 building at 623 Market Street, added a fourth story and joined it with their other buildings (Building 5). Around 1940 the company enlarged the building to five stories and added a new facade. This facade consisted of metal and tile panels with central panels containing Art Deco designs.

These buildings were occupied by the Miller Brothers Company for the next 25 years with few changes to the upper facade. The storefronts on all of the buildings were remodeled several times as the company's merchandising techniques changed with styles and fashions. The most significant change to the exterior of the building occurred in 1966 when a totally new facade of metal was added. This metal facade completely enclosed the building and obscured all historic features. This facade remained on the building until 1986 when it was removed by the present owners.

The present condition of the Miller Brothers complex is reflective of both its original appearance plus alterations made in the 1920s and 1940s. With the removal of the exterior metal skin certain alterations were noted. This included removal of the original sheet metal cornice, damage to some of the brick and terra cotta panels and storefront levels. The damaged brick and terra cotta are presently under repair and care is being taken to match the original with the new.

Present Condition

The original building constructed by Miller Brothers in 1897 is a four story brick structure with a storefront of terra cotta panels added by 1926 (Building 1). The display windows and doors are of modern metal design added in the 1970s. Above the doors and windows are three light transoms with textured glass also added in the 1920s. In the middle of each window is a pivoting vent which was originally used for ventilation. Enclosing the entire storefront are terra cotta panels. The terra cotta is fashioned into Doric motif pilasters flanking each bay with a large belt course in a Greek fret band design separating the first and second floors. Above the main doorways are arches with floral decoration and an ornate keystone.

On the second and fourth stories are rectangular one-over-one sash windows. Above the windows on the second story is a wide stone belt course. The third floor windows are arched with rectangular one-over-one

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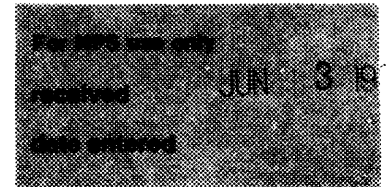
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sash windows and elliptical transoms. Above both the third and fourth story windows are corbelled brick belt courses with modillion block designs. At the roofline a new brick parapet wall is being added at the location of the removed sheet metal cornice. This configuration is also present on the 1906 addition adjacent to the original building (Building 3).

The adjacent four story brick building facing Broad Street (Building 2) retains some of its original cast iron pilasters. These are quite decorative and were manufactured by a Chattanooga iron company. The upper facade contains six bays of rectangular windows which were originally one-over-one sash. Separating each window is a brick pier and above and below the windows is corbelled brickwork. At the location of the removed sheet metal cornice a brick parapet is being constructed.

The four story brick building facing Broad Street at the northwest of the complex (Building 4) also displays cast iron pilasters at the storefront. On the second story are four bays of rectangular windows with those on the third and fourth stories are slightly arched. All of the windows originally contained one-over-one sash. Below the windows are stone sills with corbelled brickwork above the windows.

The final building in the complex (Building 5) has a facade added ca. 1940. No historic features remain on the storefront. On the upper facade are metal and terra cotta panels with a central bay containing three-over-three metal windows. Below the windows are spandrel panels of floral Art Deco design. At the roofline is added ca. 1970 metal sheathing.

The interiors of the buildings in the Miller Brothers complex originally consisted of open floor space with few partition walls or decorative detailing. The open space configuration was important for flexibility in the location of display areas, display cases and variations in the arrangement of departments and merchandise. The most striking interior feature in the five buildings is the large skylight on the fourth floor of the original building (Building 1). This skylight remains in good condition and still provides light into the fourth story. Another interior feature which exists in this building is part of an original staircase with newel posts and turned balusters. This staircase is in fair to poor condition. All other original stairs, skylight openings or other features have been removed during the many remodelings which occurred in the buildings.

The present interiors are a mixture of both historic and modern fabric. The open space arrangement of the interior remains which is characteristic of the complex. Decorative interior details were limited on the interior and of these only few have survived. The original frame

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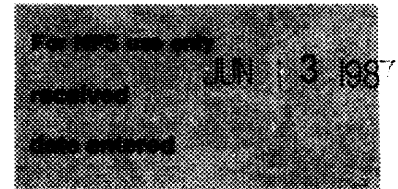
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floors exist in many sections of the complex as does some of the original plaster on the brick walls. The original ceiling levels are intact throughout the buildings. Above the first floor level in the main building (Building 1) is a mezzanine level which was first introduced ca. 1920 and substantially remodeled in the 1950s and 1960s. This building also contains modern escalators and elevators. Other partition walls and offices added between 1950 and 1980 have been removed and the floor areas opened to their original configuration.

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 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 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 1898-ca. 1945 **Builder/Architect** Reuben H. Hunt, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Miller Brothers Department Store is a complex of five buildings located at 629 Market Street in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee. The buildings were all constructed prior to 1907 and were the home of the Miller Brothers Department Store for over 75 years. This company was the leading mercantile establishment in the city for much of the 20th century with the Miller family prominent in the growth and development of Chattanooga business. The complex has been nominated under criteria A and B due to the Miller Brothers role in the commerce of the city. Due to the exceptional significance of the complex in the 1940s the property is also being nominated under criterion exception G.

The growth, development and decline of the Miller Brothers Department Store and the resultant effect on the physical fabric of the buildings provides an interesting case study in the history of the department store in America. As the primary department store in the city of Chattanooga, Miller Brothers strived to stay abreast of changing fashions and styles. The company responded to a changing downtown retail market with remodelings, new services and added parking - all of which proved futile after 1960 as the suburban shopping malls bled away much of their downtown business.

Miller Brothers was founded in 1889 by Frank Miller Sr. and Gustavus H. Miller. Gustavus Miller was born in Coryell County, Texas and was the eldest son of Franklin and Emily Miller. His younger brother, Frank Miller Sr. was also born in Texas. Early in their childhood the family moved from Texas to Bell Buckle, Tennessee. The two brothers opened their first store while in their twenties in the small Rutherford County community of Christiana. In the late 1880s they moved their store to Bell Buckle where they operated until 1889. In that year the two brothers moved to Chattanooga which they felt offered greater business opportunities.

The original Miller Brothers store was located at 510 Market Street and was called the New York Racket Store. It consisted of a single room and the stock was limited to a small selection of dry goods, notions and novelties. The brothers advertised their wares in the local paper including "200 dozen pairs of hose ranging in price from 4 to 18 cents; a few pairs of fine Dungola button kid shoes at \$1.45, worth \$2.50." The store later moved between Sixth and Seventh Streets on Market and later to 715-17 Market Street. In 1897, the substantial six-story brick Richardson Building burned down at the prominent location of Broad, Seventh and Market Streets. This tragic fire killed two persons including noted architect Samuel M. Patton. After the fire, the property

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. .8 acres

Quadrangle name Chattanooga, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	6	5	4	1	8	5	3	8	7	9	5	7	5
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 The boundary for the Miller Brothers Building is shown as the dotted line on accompanying Hamilton County tax map 135-M-D, Group C, Parcel 10. The boundary includes all property historically associated with the Miller Brothers Building. The building is bounded by Market, Seventh and Broad Streets and a party wall to the north.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Philip Thomason

organization Thomason and Assoc.

date February 27, 1987

street & number P.O. Box 121225

telephone 615-383-0227

city or town Nashville

state Tennessee

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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hanger

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 8/10/87

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

date 9/17/87

Keeper of the National Register [Signature]

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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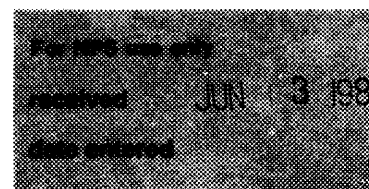
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was placed on the market. The two Miller brothers raised \$40,000 to purchase the site and began planning their new store.

In his book, A History of the Department Store, author John Ferry cites location as a primary reason some early stores succeeded while others failed. He defines a department store as a large "retail store for the sale of many kinds of goods by departments." The first stores which met this criteria in America evolved during the early 1800s in cities such as New York and Philadelphia. It was not until after the Civil War that department stores saw their golden age. In the late 19th century almost every major city in the country had one or more large department stores which supplied a full range of goods and services. Most stores attempted to locate along the city's main thoroughfares and busiest streets.

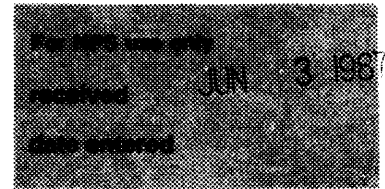
During the late 19th century, Market and Broad streets were the main business centers in Chattanooga. Along these streets were the major banks, stores and restaurants of the city. Electric streetcar lines ran along both streets and connected with all parts of the city. In purchasing the site of the burned Richardson Building, the Miller brothers assured themselves of increased visibility.

The four-story brick building constructed by the Miller Brothers in 1898 fronted 110 feet on Market Street, 200 feet along Seventh Street and 110 feet along Broad Street. Major entrances were located on each street with large arched doorways leading into the first floor. Along the Market Street front and the Seventh Street side of the building were offices which the Miller Brothers rented. These offices remained in the building until the Hamilton National Bank was built about 1912. Then partitions were torn out and Miller Brothers occupied the entire building.

With the exception of the small office spaces, the building consisted of open floor space for the display of merchandise. The interior was simple with frame floors, brick and plaster walls and few partitions. The open space configuration allowed large aisles for the flow of shoppers and flexibility in display areas. Large cases, shelves and counters displayed a variety of goods on each floor. The four floors were connected by several staircases. The most striking feature of the interior was the large skylight and atrium in the center of the building. This skylight was very large and allowed a substantial amount of light into the interior of the building. Railings on the second and third floors around the lightwell offered customers views throughout the store. This interior arrangement was typical of early department stores which maximized the light in the building to illuminate merchandise and create dramatic effects with the interior arrangement.

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The architect for the building was Reuben H. Hunt who designed the structure in the Victorian Romanesque style. Hunt was born in Elbert County, Georgia, and in 1882 at the age of twenty he moved to Chattanooga. There he secured a job while studying architecture. He assumed full duties of an architect in 1885 and began designing commercial buildings, churches and residences throughout the South. Among his most notable works in Chattanooga were the Carnegie Library, Park Hotel and Hamilton County Courthouse. Between 1895 and 1930 the R.H. Hunt Company was one of the most prolific in the South completing over fifty major buildings.

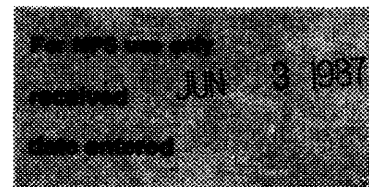
Upon completion of the Miller Brothers building, company ads boasted "the greatest display of merchandise that has ever shown in a Southern store." Miller Brothers kept buyers "constantly in the Eastern markets on the lookout for bargains suited to their trade, both retail and wholesale." Advertisements and promotion by the company were widespread in their first few years. The new location was highly successful for the firm and it was apparent that more space was needed. By 1901, the firm had acquired the four-story brick commercial building directly adjacent along Broad Street. This building was used to house the men's furnishings department and a factory for making cloaks. The two buildings were connected by large arched doorways. To help them manage their growing business the brothers hired cousin Oscar Miller in 1900. Oscar Miller was general manager until his death in 1935. In 1903, the business was chartered under the laws of Tennessee.

The early 1900s were years of rapid population growth in Chattanooga and many new buildings were constructed in the downtown area. Several other department stores provided competition but Miller Brothers overshadowed all rivals with their number of customers and sales volume. Of these department stores Lovemans was the most notable and it was regarded as the primary rival of Millers. Lovemans was begun in the late 19th century and had a store located on Market Street one block from Millers. In the early 1900s the store had 38,000 square feet of retail space or about one-third the size of Millers.

In 1906, Millers again expanded by purchasing the two existing buildings at 625 and 627 Market Street. These two-story buildings were enlarged to four stories and joined with the main store by arched doorways. The fronts of both buildings were totally remodeled to resemble the facade of their first building next door. New brick arching, belt courses and other details were added to present a uniform appearance on Market Street. Only a few years later the company added a new storefront design on the Market and Seventh Street facades. This new storefront consisted of a new skin of terra cotta with decorative pilasters, arching over the entrances and multi-colored belt coursing.

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In 1917 the company continued its expansion with the acquisition of another four-story building along Broad Street and the three-story building at 623 Market Street. Little remodeling of the Broad Street building was undertaken but a fourth floor was added to the Market Street building. With these acquisitions the Miller Brothers complex was the largest department store in Chattanooga with almost 150,000 square feet of space.

In addition to their interest in the department store, each of the Miller brothers played a role in other commercial development in Chattanooga. Frank Miller Sr. helped to found and manage the United Hosiery Mills Company and was active in banking and land investments. His brother Gus Miller served as Vice-President of the Hamilton National Bank. He also helped found the United Hosiery Mill and the Miller-Smith Mill. By the early 1920s the Miller brothers had helped to make Chattanooga the nation's second leading manufacturer of women's hosiery.

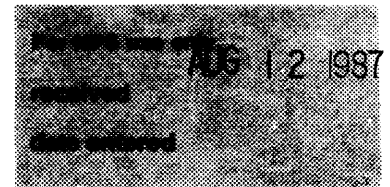
Frank Miller died on January 29, 1921 in Morristown, New Jersey. Management of the company continued under Gus Miller throughout the rest of the 1920s. Major renovations continued in the department store as it changed to respond to customer needs. In 1928 an extension to the balcony on the first floor (now the mezzanine level) was added. The area was used as a luncheonette and soda fountain by the company. A tile floor of green and cream colors was added. New tables and counters seated 72 persons. In addition to this luncheon area, Miller Brothers also added a cafeteria on the fourth floor. The balcony was completely remodeled, and a beauty parlor added to the second floor. Large display windows were installed, and office space on the third and fourth floors was converted into merchandise selling space.

With the death of Gus Miller in 1929, ownership and management of the company was assumed by his son Felix Miller Sr. and nephew Frank Miller Jr. Despite the Depression most major department stores across the country managed to stay in business and several continued to prosper and expand. Stores cut back on expensive merchandise and concentrated on competitive pricing of less expensive goods. Miller Brothers weathered the Depression successfully and undertook a major renovation of the store in 1937.

During the 1937 renovation, the Broad Street facade was entirely remodeled with six new display windows and a new entrance. A photograph of this completed work shows terra cotta pilasters, large display windows, three light transoms with metal casement windows with textured glass and other features which exist today. The work on the building also included interior remodeling. The work on the Broad Street facade was made to conform in size and design with those on Market and Seventh Streets.

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The 1937 work included the introduction of an air conditioning system which was one of the first in any store in Chattanooga. This system pulled air through the store with two eight-foot fans both in summer and winter. The air passed through a fine spray and then a filtration system. Store doors and windows could then be closed which cut down on interior dirt and wastage of soiled clothes and merchandise. The first floor was entirely remodeled in 1937 as was the mezzanine. Stairs to the mezzanine were entirely rebuilt at this time. A larger soda fountain and lunch bar was installed on the balcony. The cafeteria was redesigned. Designed by the firm of R.H. Hunt of Chattanooga, altogether the 1937 remodeling cost \$200,000.

In 1939 the store employed between 400 and 500 persons and Miller Brothers was at its height of prosperity into the 1940s. The building at 623 Market Street was enlarged with a fifth story ca. 1940 and the entire building was covered with a sheathing of Art Deco design terra cotta panels. The store's three restaurants were patronized by 2,000 to 2,500 persons per day. A barber shop, photo studio and mail order business operated in addition to regular sales departments. The introduction of mail order business, lay-a-way purchases and widespread publicity were all part of typical department store practices utilized by Miller Brothers. It continued to be the dominant downtown department store in Chattanooga throughout the 1940s with sales each year in the millions of dollars. Lovemans continued to be its primary competition during these years but Lovemans remained smaller in size and had fewer employees. Other department store chains opened downtown in these years including J.C. Penny and Sears. Millers continued to be the most successful department store in downtown Chattanooga despite this increased competition.

Part of the reason for the dominance of Miller Brothers during these years was the willingness to innovate to bring new features into the store. The introduction of air conditioning was the first of any large store in Chattanooga. The first escalators in all of East Tennessee were installed in the building in 1947. A home furnishing store was also opened across the street on Broad Street in 1950. It connected with the original store via a subway tunnel under the street. All of these additions to the store over a thirteen year period increased convenience and comfort for Miller Brother customers.

During the 1950s the traditional downtown department store began to wane. This was identified due to two primary factors; demography of demand and competition. In his book Department Store Merchandising in Changing Environments, Louis Grossman cites the rise in consumer spending between 1950 and 1960 and the demand for better quality goods. Of even greater significance was the rise of the suburban shopping mall as automobile use increased and residents moved away from central city areas. Most urban department stores responded to this challenge by

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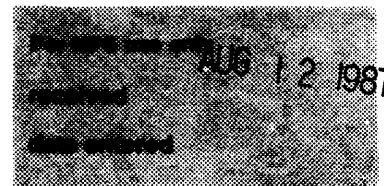
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opening branch stores in the new suburbs, increasing the quality of their merchandise and improving the main or flagship stores.

This pattern is evident in the history of Miller Brothers after 1945. The company saw the potential market in the suburban growth around Chattanooga and began opening branch stores. The company acquired an existing store in Rome, Georgia in 1947 and renamed it Millers. Miller Brothers opened another branch store in 1954 at the corner of Brainerd and Germantown Road in Chattanooga. This was followed in 1958 by a store in Highland Plaza. In 1962 the company added a store with 60,000 square feet of space at the Eastgate Mall. Another store was added in Rossville in 1965.

As the company saw its downtown sales declining during the 1960s they decided one way to improve their market and image was to completely remodel their original buildings. The exterior of most buildings in the complex had not substantially changed above the first floor storefronts. In keeping with the emphasis on modernity and in the interests of revitalizing the appearance of downtown the company embarked on an ambitious series of "improvements."

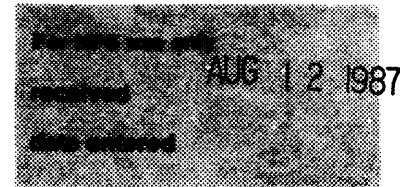
In 1966 first floor remodeling was completed. This included enclosing the balcony, lowering the ceiling and applying acoustical tile and textured paint to floor and ceiling surfaces. A spring motif was added with soft pastel colors and live canaries to provide "the sounds of the season." New carpet and tile floors were added. Said Felix Miller, Jr. of the renovation "We feel we have made some pretty sizeable shows of faith in downtown Chattanooga and we believe downtown is here to stay."

As retail trade began to erode in downtown areas in the 1960s attempts were made by both civic and business leaders to reverse this trend. Various plans and projects such as urban renewal, downtown malls, demolition and alterations of older buildings were all popular concepts used across the country in an effort to revitalize the center city. Like most major cities the government of Chattanooga undertook several plans stressing modernization of its downtown area and worked closely with the business community. As the primary department store downtown Miller Brothers felt the modernization of its flagship store would be a sound business venture and in keeping with the future direction of the city.

On April 27, 1967 the company celebrated a 3.5 million dollar renovation of the original building at Broad and Market Streets. This renovation included the addition of a new facade of porcelain steel which encased the entire building. New show windows were installed, every interior floor was remodeled and a new 450 car garage was added across Broad

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Street. Felix Miller, Jr. stated that "We have shown our complete confidence in the future of downtown Chattanooga by the investment of approximately \$3.5 million by Miller Bros. Co. and its affiliated Miller Investment Co., which erected the parking garage."

In planning the new metal facade in 1966, Blackwell Smith, executive vice president stated that "the new exterior will contribute greatly to the attractiveness of the retail district..." The metal facade cost \$250,000 to install. The new steel skin was to provide not only a new look for the building but also new "strength" by added vertical columns the height of the building. The result was the complete disappearance of all historic features of the building beneath the added metal facade. The installation of the facade resulted in damage to the original brick and terra cotta surface as the metal framework was attached to the face of the building. In their long range planning the company had no future plans for removing the metal facade and did not prevent this damage to the historic exterior of their buildings.

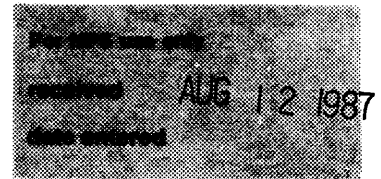
Modernization of the physical fabric of historic department store buildings was a common occurrence nationwide during this period. Many older buildings were simply razed and new stores erected or the downtown locations were abandoned entirely. Other stores either covered the original exterior with metal panels or enclosed the windows. In Tennessee this can be seen not only with the Miller Brothers store but also Goldsmith's in Memphis and Castner-Knott in Nashville, who covered their historic downtown buildings with metal panels.

Despite the modernization of the downtown stores, many had declining sales during the 1960s and 1970s as the retail trade in suburban areas increased. Only six years after the dedication of the remodeled Miller Brothers building the family decided to sell its downtown store. It passed out of the hands of the family in 1973 when it was acquired by the national retail firm of Garfinckel, Brooks Brothers, Miller and Rhoads, Inc. of Washington, D.C. The Garfinckel chain operated sixty-seven stores in fifteen states. At the time of the sale most of the stock in the company was owned by Emily Miller Smith daughter of Gus Miller. Her son, Gordon Blackwell Smith Jr. was a principal officer of the firm at the time of the sale along with Felix Grundy Miller Jr.

The Garfinckel chain kept the name Millers for the store and in 1977 completed another renovation of the interior. This remodeling of the interior included new fixtures, carpeting and paint. Departments were relocated throughout the building. This renovation again proved unsuccessful in increasing the store's market. In 1986 the company decided that keeping the downtown store open "was no longer economical.

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet Miller Brothers Building
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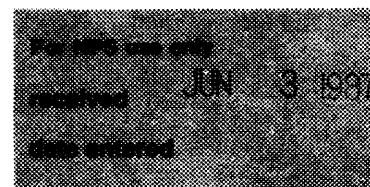
Along with Millers several other major department stores closed their downtown stores in these years. J.C. Penny's store closed in 1983 and Sears planned to close in 1987. Only Lovemans, a locally run chain, is expected to keep open a downtown store in Chattanooga in the future. Revitalization of downtown Chattanooga is no longer dependent on large retail stores but instead is directed towards new office space, small retail shops and apartments.

The Miller Brothers building was purchased in 1986 by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Tennessee. Blue Cross is Tennessee's largest health insurer, employing 1,200 people. Blue Cross decided to restore the Miller Brothers complex to its original exterior appearance. In late 1986 the exterior metal facade was removed. Work began to repair the damaged brick and terra cotta. The interior skylight was once again to be reused and the windows reopened.

The Miller Brothers Department Store was the leading mercantile establishment in downtown Chattanooga for most of the early and mid-20th century. Its growth and decline is typical of department stores across the country and follows a pattern documented by several business historians. Both Gus and Frank Miller were innovators in providing services to Chattanooga. Their store became a landmark in the city. The Miller Brothers business and family played a leading role in the commercial history of the city throughout the early and mid-20th century. A 1972 newspaper article stated that Millers was regarded by many as a "Chattanooga institution" for its role in local commerce and merchandising. With the renovation of their original flagship store a valuable architectural and historical resource of Chattanooga is being restored to the street. This complex of buildings is significant through its role in city commerce, association with the Miller family and as an example of changing attitudes and approaches in 20th century merchandising.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



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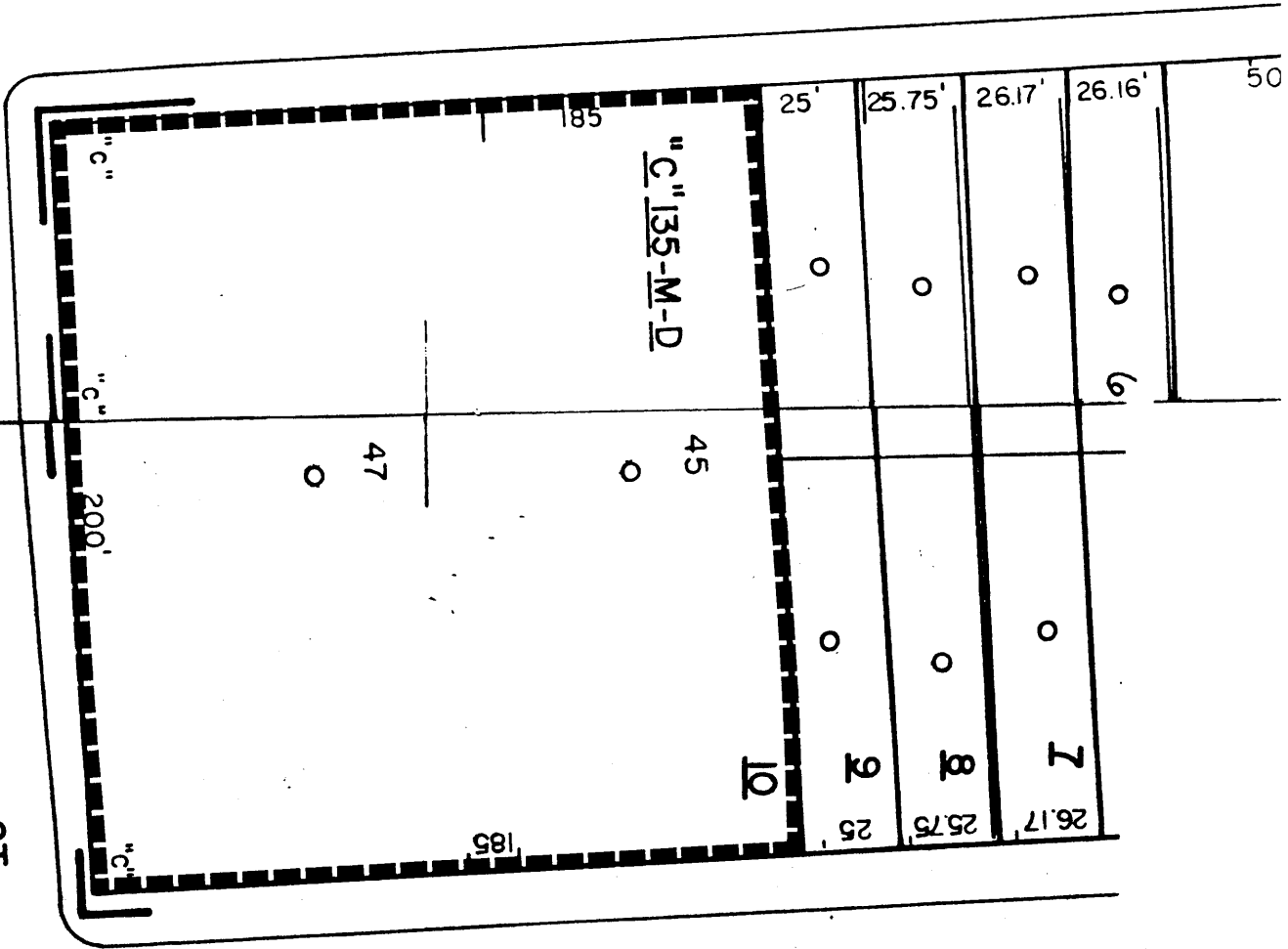
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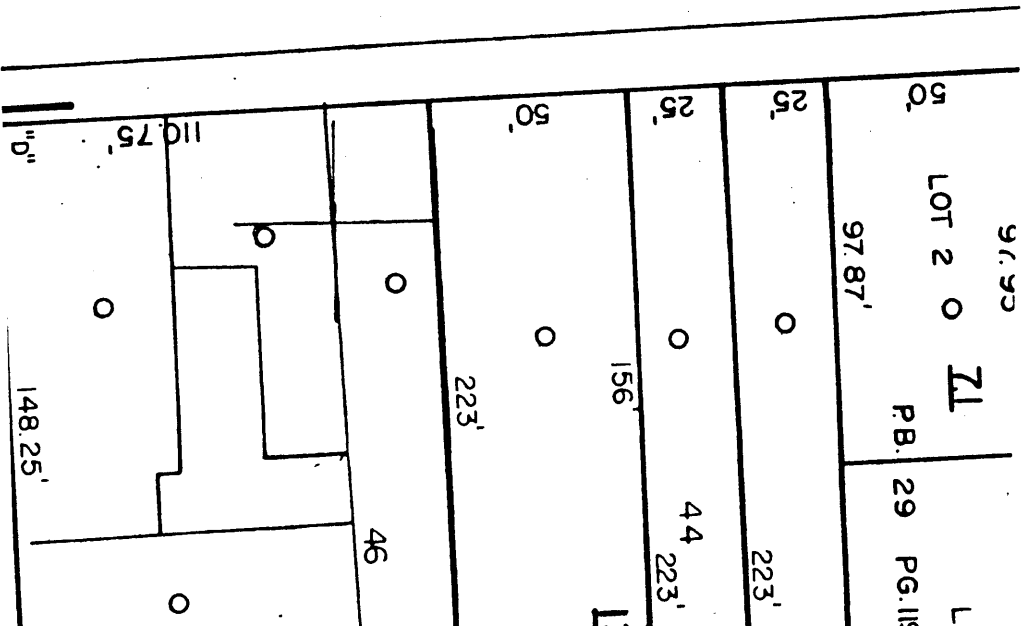
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Broad Street



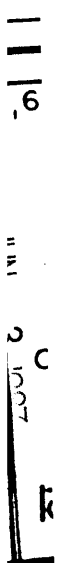
W. 7th ST

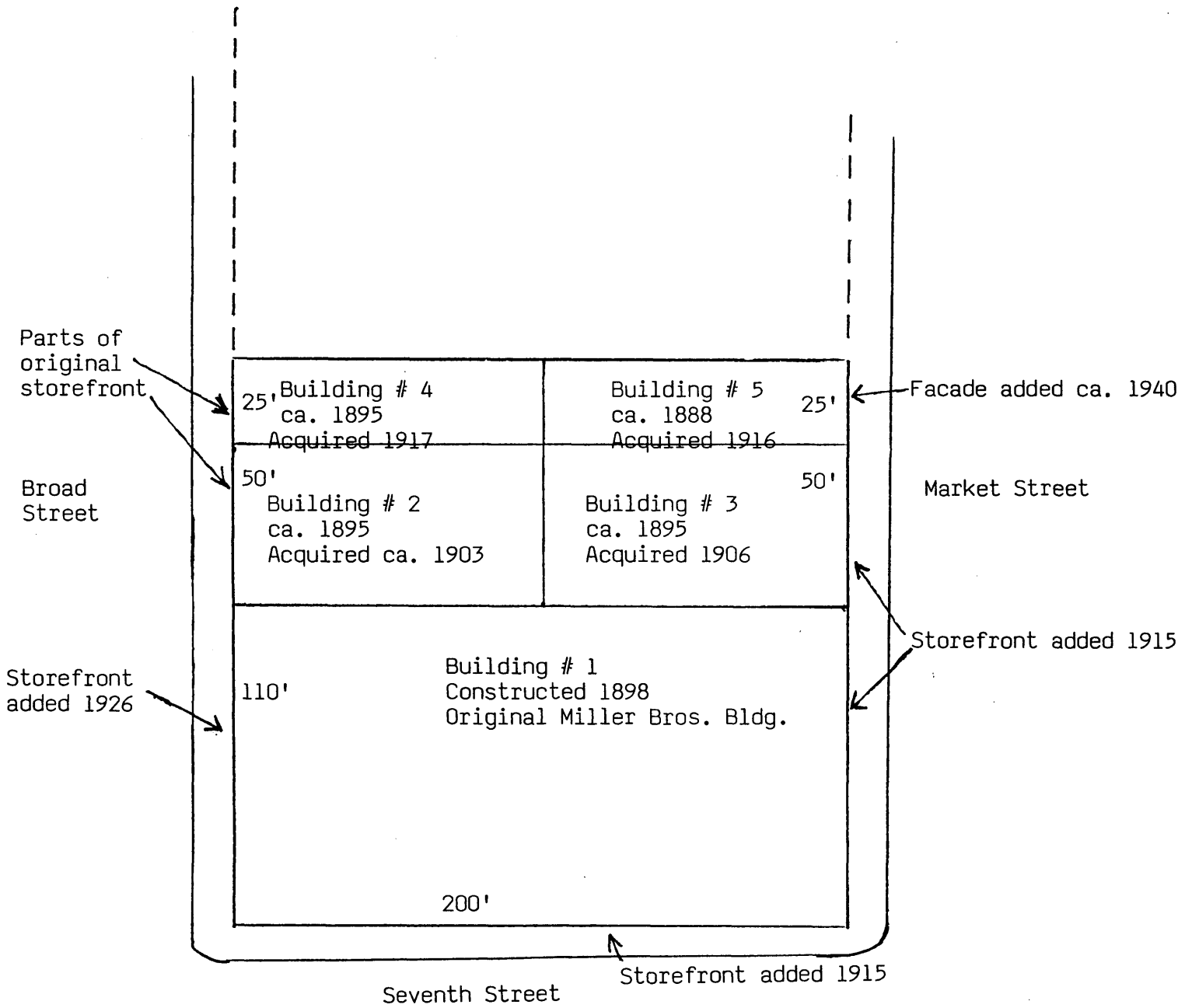
Market Street



Miller Brothers Department Store
 629 Market Street
 Chattanooga, Hamilton County, Tennessee

TAX MAP 135-M-D, Block C, lot 10
 Scale: 1" = 50'
 Boundary shown as dotted line
 #1 of 2





Miller Brothers Department Store
 629 Market Street
 Chattanooga, Hamilton County, Tennessee

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