

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

14777

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name M.F. Shafer & Co. Building

Other names/site number O'Keefe Elevator Warehouse (DO09:0128-017)

2. Location

Street & number 1624 Webster Not for publication

City or town Omaha Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Douglas Code 055 Zip code 68102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lawrence Sammon
Signature of certifying official

10/21/02
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edouard A. Beall 12/5/02

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

"Warehouses in Omaha"

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick

Roof

Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/trade

Architecture

Period of Significance

1917-1952

Significant Dates

1917

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

John and Alan McDonald

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Omaha City Planning Dept.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	253890	4572230	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Todd H. Knispel

organization _____ date June 2002

street & number 7568 Miami Plaza, #5 telephone (402) 408-0279

city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68134

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Denis "Skip" O'Keefe, O'Keefe Elevator Company

street & number 1402 Jones St. telephone (402) 345-4056

city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68102

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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M.F. Shafer & Company Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

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Narrative Description

The M.F. Shafer building located north of the central business district of Omaha, Nebraska is a five-story commercial property built in 1917. Omaha is located in the eastern part of the state of Nebraska on the western banks of the Missouri River across the river from Council Bluffs, Iowa. Omaha is named after the Omaha Tribe, which occupied the area prior to the founding of the city. Founded in 1854, Omaha quickly became an important part of the westward expansion of the United States during the last half of the 19th Century. Omaha's importance as a trade center was assured after it was named the eastern terminus of the first transcontinental railroad in 1863. With railroad and river access, Omaha would become Nebraska's largest city.

The building is located in the northeast section of downtown Omaha. It is separated from the primary downtown historic warehouse district, "The Old Market", by a new development known as the Northeast Development Plan. Although physically disassociated from the primary downtown core, there are other prominent historic warehouses in the immediate vicinity. The Omaha Certified Local Government has recommended the Shafer building eligible for the National Register and has taken specific steps to identify it and two others in the area redevelopment plan as eligible properties that are good candidates for rehabilitation. Other buildings in the area consist of 2 to 5 story commercial, industrial and warehouse buildings.

The M.F. Shafer building is considered to belong to the Commercial Style of architecture most common from 1890-1920. Commercial Style buildings are between five to sixteen stories with straight fronts, flat roofs, windows that are large rectangular, and variously divided. The extensive use of glass was made possible by steel-frame or concrete construction, which could bear the structural loads that masonry could not. The façade of Commercial Style buildings usually have minimal to no ornamentation. The Commercial Style is usually considered to come out of Chicago near the end of the Nineteenth Century.

The M.F. Shafer building is a good example of Commercial Style architecture with its plain brick construction and multi-paned windows. The property is a red brick, structural concrete 65 X 132 foot building. The only ornamentation is a running band of tan sandstone separating the first floor from the half basement with the names of the streets (Webster & Seventeenth) carved into this running band. Pilasters and a transom into which the name of the building and the date of construction have been carved flank the main sandstone entry. Large multi-paned industrial windows are located along the south or front facade and along the western side and are the most dominant feature of the building. The eastern side of the Shafer building is plain brick with double hung windows along its rear third. The rear of the building accommodates the fire escape and the loading dock with abandoned railroad access. The flagpole on the southwest corner of the roof was part of the original design plans. The architects for the M.F. Schafer Building were the local firm of John and Alan McDonald.

The interior of the building remains in original condition with simple large open spaces, poured concrete floors and pillars evenly spaced throughout each of its five floors. Office space in the Shafer building is located on the first floor along the front or south side of the building. The alterations to the building are the attached streetlights and "O'Keefe" sign. Another alteration was the removal of the brick cornice. These alterations to the building are minimal and typical of modern changes, but do not adversely affect the integrity and character of the building. Overall, the building retains a high degree of historic integrity and is able to convey its historic significance to the commercial development of Omaha.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

The M.F. Shafer building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Omaha's wholesale jobbing trade. In addition, the M.F. Shafer building is also eligible under criteria C for exhibiting distinctive characteristics of a type of construction, namely that of a significant Omaha warehouse. The M. F. Shafer building meets the registration requirements of the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Warehouses in Omaha* (1991). The building has association with the wholesale jobbing trade in Omaha and represents the structural and stylistic subtypes described in the Multiple Property Submission (MPS). In addition, the Shafer building possesses a high degree of integrity as required in the *Warehouses in Omaha* document by possessing most of its original material and features. The period of significance for the building is 1917-1952. This period covers the date of construction during one of Omaha's Wholesale Jobbing booms. The 1925 date is when the Shafer building became a warehouse and 1952 the fifty-year cutoff for the National Register. The continuous use of the building as a warehouse is justified as it continues to function as such today. Constructed in 1917 the building was first used as a printing company before becoming strictly a warehouse circa 1925. The building has been used as a warehouse through most of its existence. The M.F. Shafer building is located in Omaha, Douglas County. Omaha is Nebraska's largest city and the commercial and transportation center of Nebraska.

Although population in early Omaha and Douglas County history did not exceed 1,000 people, the city soon became known as an outfitter for those traveling west during the late 1850's. As more and more people settled the West, Omaha became known as a place along the Missouri River to purchase supplies. When the city of Omaha was selected as the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad in 1863, Omaha experienced a boom in population. Omaha took advantage of its unique position on the railroad to develop as a major distribution center for Nebraska and other states of the west. These favorable business conditions allowed Omaha to develop a downtown warehouse district to distribute goods westward.

Warehousing and wholesale jobbing flourished in Omaha because of the availability of materials and goods via the railroad and river. The success of Omaha commerce spurred the expansion of areas like the "Old Market" (NRHP 1979), Jobbers Canyon (NRHP 1986--removed 2002) and the Rail and Commerce Historic District (NRHP 1996), where commercial warehousing and jobbing flourished.

Commercial growth all but came to a stop in the 1890's due to the 1893 depression that also effected the rest of the nation. By the end of the decade, Omaha and the nation began to emerge from the financial difficulties of the depression. The turn of the century brought a resurgence of Omaha's economy. Most warehouses and commercial properties located in the National Register Districts listed above were associated with this second boom era.

With the coming of the First World War in 1914, Nebraska experienced another economic boom, especially in the farm sector. The Allied need for food allowed farmers of the state and elsewhere to prosper, as they never had before. The economic growth of the farmer spread to other sectors of the economy. It was during this time that Omaha's commercial area began to spread northward. The areas between Capitol and Cass 17th and 18th Streets were once all single-family dwellings. The first large building to move into the area was the Ford Plant (DO009: 129-003). The *Omaha Bee* May 27, 1917 stated that the "Ford Plant was the first to show the potential of this area and were happy to see that a second large building, M.F. Shafer Building was just completed." The Shafer building was designed by the local architectural firm of John and Alan McDonald. John & Alan McDonald designed Hill Hotel (NRHP, 1988) constructed 1919. They also designed other buildings such as Standard Oil building (NRHP, 1979), 1st Unitarian Church (NRHP, 1980), and Joslyn Castle (1972) as well as several other significant structures. In 1931, for example John McDonald designed the Joslyn Museum of Art in Omaha, which is highly regarded in architectural circles.

Marion F. Schafer was the president of American State Bank and was the Vice President of Shafer & Co. Printers. Shafer & Co. Printers services were in advertising specialties, catalogues and calendars. Services included art and copy department especially

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equipped for catalogue work. By 1923, Shafer & Co. was no longer in business and the building became, for a short while, an office building. Denis O'Keefe Elevator Company, Grip Bow Tie Co., and Father Flanagan's Boys Home Offices were some of the businesses that occupied the M.F. Shafer Building. By 1925, the M.F. Shafer Building took on what its function is today, a warehouse. A short list of some of the business that used the building for a warehouse over the years include Omaha Mattress, Goodyear Tire, I Van Go Storage, and O'Keefe Elevator.

Located north of the core downtown, the area around the Shafer building is made up of one to five-story industrial, commercial and warehouse buildings with most built after World War I. The building follows the function and form standards set forth in the *Warehouses in Omaha* multiple property listing: "The primary function of warehouse buildings in Omaha was to provide space for the storage and distribution of finished products, and to a lesser degree, to provide for the storage of raw materials and associated space for light manufacturing." (Section FII, P.1) Its rectangular shape was utilized to store and ship goods, and its style is more functional than ornamental. The warehouse property type is primarily associated with the wholesale jobbing industry, a major component in the commercial and economic development of Omaha. The Omaha Certified Local Government identified the M.F. Shafer building as eligible for the National Register and good for future development along with two other buildings in the area.

The M.F. Shafer building is considered to belong to the Commercial Style of architecture most common from 1890-1920. Commercial Style buildings are between five to sixteen stories with straight fronts, flat roofs, windows that are large rectangular, and variously divided. The extensive use of glass was made possible by steel-frame or concrete construction, which could bear the structural loads that masonry could not. The façade of Commercial Style buildings usually have minimal to no ornamentation. The Commercial Style is usually considered to come out of Chicago near the end of the Nineteenth Century.

Overall, the M.F. Shafer Building retains a high degree of historic integrity due to its early transformation into a warehouse, which kept changes to the building at a minimum. Additionally, the transformation of the building from a printing plant to a warehouse is in keeping with the evolution of building use as documented in the *Warehouses in Omaha* MPS ("... to provide for the storage of raw materials and associated space for light manufacturing." Sec. F.II, P.1) The M.F. Shafer building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A as specified in the *Warehouses in Omaha* "for its association with the wholesale jobbing industry in Omaha." (Sec. F.III, p.1) In addition, due to its excellent integrity, the Schafer building is eligible under criterion C as a "significant property type in Omaha formally, functionally, technically and aesthetically." (Sec. F.III, p.1). In addition, this Omaha warehouse gains significance in architecture for its association with one of the city's most prominent architects (MPS Sec. F.III, P.2).

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of this property include only the building with no surrounding land located the square between 17th and 16th Streets on the east and west, Webster and Burt Streets on the north and south. The legal description is defined as the SE Corner of lot 6, block 351, Lots 5 & 6 plat of Omaha.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries were selected, as no other land was historically associated with the building.

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

M.F. Shafer & Company Building

Douglas County, Nebraska

Todd Knispel, photographer

June 25, 2002

Original negatives held by Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

1. South façade, looking north
2. Main entrance, looking north
3. Stonework, looking northeast
4. North and east facades, looking northwest
5. Loading dock, looking southeast
6. South and west facades, looking southeast
7. North and west facades, looking southeast
8. Interior, freight elevator, looking north
9. Interior, warehouse space, looking south