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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 28 1987

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Neusteter Building
other names/site number Neusteter's

2. Location

street & number 720 16th Street not for publication N/A
city, town Denver vicinity N/A
state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80202

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Barbara Sudler 10-20-87
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

N/A _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date
N/A _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Alou Byer 11-30-87
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade: department store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Domestic: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Marble

walls Limestone

roof Asphalt

other Cornice at roof: copper

storefront framing: bronze

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Neusteter Building is a five story, flat roofed commercial block, fronting 125 feet (seven bays) on Sixteenth Street and 170 feet (five bays) on Stout Street. The original 1924 department store is built of buff colored limestone with a large overhanging copper cornice at the roof, two wrought iron and glass canopies, and unusual arcade-type, bronze framed display windows on Sixteenth Street. In terms of stylistics, the building is a late example of the Commercial Style. The building consists of the 1924 original block and a smaller c. 1952 pre-cast concrete addition to the Stout Street facade which is integral with the original structure. The large parking garage adjacent to the building on the south is a separate structure built in 1974 and not part of the historic building. The building has maintained the integrity of its exterior, and the impact of the Stout Street addition is not significant.

The Neusteter Building is located on Sixteenth Street, the main retailing street in the central business district in Denver. Historically, Sixteenth Street was known as the "Fifth Avenue of Denver," according to the Denver Post, September 7, 1924. The retailing tradition on Sixteenth Street has been reinforced with the recent construction of a mall which encourages pedestrian and shopping activities.

The structural system of the building is concrete and steel in both the 1924 and 1950 portions, but it incorporates an earlier 19th century wood post and beam structure within the 1924 building. This wood structure is what remains of the Neusteter's first store, the Hughes Building, which remained in business while the new store was being built around it in 1924.

The Neusteter Building features a ribbon of black marble around its base. Very unusual black polished marble with large white fossils (origin is unknown) was used on the face of each pier and plain black polished marble was used under every show window. Rectangular blocks of "Select Grey" limestone ashlar, four inches thick, from the Dark Hollow quarries in Bedford, Indiana, cut and dressed to a smooth finish, was used to sheath the exterior of the building. Above the clerestory of each show window, the limestone is cut and laid in flat arches with voussoirs. The piers and spandrels of the building are in the same plane and there is an emphasis on the horizontal lines of the building over the vertical lines.

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Neusteter Building

At each floor, there is a finely cut limestone projecting sill course in an ogee shape. Above the first floor is a more elaborate limestone cornice featuring a dentil course under the ogee moulding. From the architect's correspondence records and the original architectural specifications for the building, it was found that white Colorado Yule marble was the first choice of the architect and owner, but the limestone was selected because it was less than half the price of the Colorado stone. The limestone, however, proved troublesome because by 1926 it was showing "soiling" and staining, making it necessary to clean the building just two years after the completion of construction. Also in 1926, a decision was made to flash the top of all the sill courses and the first floor cornice with galvanized sheet metal to help prevent further staining of the limestone. The flashing did not stop the staining, but it has helped to preserve the limestone from deterioration due to moisture penetration and weathering. The exterior limestone, in general, is in excellent condition, but it soils easily and has apparently been cleaned several times in the past.

There is a large, overhanging sheet copper cornice at the roof which features elaborate modillions and ornamental panels with copper cresting at the top. The copper has a natural weathered finish which in this dry climate is dark brown in color. According to the original construction specifications, the copper was treated with chemicals to create a patina to avoid the look of new, bright copper. The building has a flat built-up asphalt roof, and several utility structures in poor condition and appearance.

There are four horizontal bands of very large, double-hung wood windows above the first floor. The window pattern is regular and similar to the "Chicago" type pattern and each opening has a broad, double-hung center window with flanking double-hung side lights. The large street-level show windows are in bronze framing and newer aluminum and have a band of translucent clerestory windows above. According to Denver building permit records, alterations occurred to the storefronts on seven occasions, between the years 1927 and 1934, with additional alterations in later years. These numerous early alterations were the result of the changing needs of the retailer. Early photographs show doorways in the first three bays of the building (west of the alley on Sixteenth Street) but now only the second bay has a door and it is in a modern mill finish aluminum storefront, incompatible with the historic structure.

The Sixteenth Street entry arcade and show windows are the most significant architectural element of the design of the facade. The fourth bay from the alley and the main entrance bay and the corner bay all appear to be original with some minor structural alterations. Three separate openings in the storefronts combine with a circulation corridor around two island display

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windows to create a small arcade leading to the main entry doors, with additional show windows lining the back of the arcade. These unique windows feature decorative cast bronze corner posts, but at some point in the past, additional aluminum supports were installed to break the large expanses of glass into smaller units. Facing Stout Street, the show windows have suffered major alterations except for the corner bay which is in original condition. The remaining bays, including the entry, have been blocked up and stuccoed. The original storefront design features recessed steel awning boxes for every window except those under the canopies. The awning boxes remain but the awnings and mechanisms are gone. The show windows were a portion of the building designed by a retail store design firm in Chicago. Taussig and Fletch, and coordinated by the Denver architects, Fisher and Fisher. There is original decorative plasterwork at the back of the show windows in the main entry arcade which is described in the newspaper account of the grand opening in 1924 as "Italian Renaissance" in style. The plasterwork remains largely intact but it has been badly overpainted. It was stated in the original construction specifications that this decorative plasterwork was not part of the work to be accomplished, indicating that Fisher and Fisher did not design the plasterwork.

The canopies, called "marquises" in the original construction drawings and specifications, were made of steel with scrolled wrought iron supports and attached to the wall above with tie rods and turnbuckles. The canopies are located at the main entry on the Sixteenth Street facade and over the former entry on the Stout Street facade. They are in nearly original condition, but the original wrought iron cresting was removed at some point in the past. The canopies originally featured glass roofs and small pieces of beveled glass, like "fringe," at the outer edge of the canopy. The glass pieces acted like prisms for the row of lights behind. The glass roofing was replaced with steel plate in 1936.

The original bronze "The Neusteter Company" signage on the building was removed before the building was sold by the family, leaving scars on the limestone. Exterior lighting, beyond that on the canopies, consists of three original hanging lamps in the arcade of the entry show windows which have survived in good condition.

The exterior of the Stout Street 1952 addition to the building is not compatible in design with the original structure. It has few windows and is faced with white precast concrete panels with an aluminum storefront and concrete canopy. The proposed rehabilitation will remove the front from this addition and introduce new windows and sheathing and a storefront while will be compatible in design with the 1924 portion of the building. (The rehabilitation of the building is currently underway and the 1952 concrete panels have been removed in preparation for the installation of the new facade on the 1952 addition. The design for this new facade has been submitted to the National Park Service for review and approval).

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The interior of the building has largely been stripped of any original material due to very frequent remodeling programs by the retailer. However, the interior as seen in early photographs, never had elaborate decorative finishes. The first floor features an original buff colored marble floor which remains in fair condition and it extends out as flooring for the main entry arcade. Original column capitals on all floors are a simple moulded plaster design and many remain in place, but few are undamaged. Early photographs show elegant and extensive retailing fixtures and cabinets, but none of these remain. The original layout of the floors was as open expanses of regularly spaced structural columns with retail fixtures creating divisions in the space. The floor layout was altered over the years with additional partitioning which will be removed prior to the proposed rehabilitation. The first floor features a partially open mezzanine which was enclosed in a past remodeling effort, but its original appearance will be restored in the proposed rehabilitation. The passenger elevators and associated trim date from the 1950 alterations.

During a remodeling program in 1937, Neusteter's commissioned the artist Vance Kirkland to paint decorative scenes at several locations in the store. Three of these decorative wall paintings survive, one over the main entry doors and another over the Stout Street doors and a third on a first floor partition. All of the paintings were on canvas and mounted on plaster walls or partitions which were alterations to the original building layout. One painting depicts Egyptian women, another Greek women and the third was badly damaged by heavy overpainting. The paintings were recently removed from these locations in the building for conservation purposes. It is the intention of the owner to donate the paintings to the Denver Art Museum for public display and protection.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

- 1. Architecture
- 2. Commerce

Period of Significance

1924 - 1937

Significant Dates

1923-1924

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Fisher and Fisher Architects:
Fisher, William Ellsworth,
Fisher, Arthur Addison

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Neusteter Building is one of the finest examples of the Commercial Style in Denver (criteria C), it is an important work of the prominent Denver firm of Fisher and Fisher Architects (criteria C), and a very significant property in the history of retailing in Denver (criteria A).

Designed by the firm of Fisher and Fisher and built in 1923-24, the building was a major commission for the architects. William Ellsworth Fisher (1871-1937) began practicing architecture in Denver between 1885 and 1890. He went into partnership with his brother Arthur Addison Fisher (1878-1965) in 1905, and they were very successful with major civic, commercial and residential buildings. By 1920, the firm had established itself as one of the largest and most influential architectural firms in the Rocky Mountain region. Their best known buildings include the Voorhies Memorial at Civic Center (listed in the National Register 2-27-74 in the Civic Center District), the Denver City Tramway Building (listed in the National Register 1-5-78), the Colorado National Bank, the A.C. Foster/University Building (listed in the National Register 1-9-78), Morey Junior High School, South High School, and the National Jewish Hospital. The firm, one of the oldest continuous firms in the Rocky Mountain region, remained in business into the 1960's with the work of William Fisher's son, Alan Berney Fisher (1905-1978). In the early 1930's, the firm published an elaborate monograph on their work, with commentary and photographs. The commentary describes the recent (1920's and 30's) work of the firm and states that the architects worked with "renaissance and classic form" stylistically, in part because climate in Denver is hot and dry like the Mediterranean. They were fashionable and talented architects working within the accepted boundaries of good taste of the early decades of the 20th century. Their fine work has helped to shape the appearance of Denver architecturally.

The Neusteter Building is a late but very pure example of the Commercial Style, as developed originally in Chicago. However, in 1924 the building was considered Italian Renaissance in style by the architects and owner. The building is classically restrained and sophisticated in design. It has very minimal ornamentation and is finely crafted with elegant materials. It features

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Original architectural specifications for Neusteter Building, related correspondence, and monograph. Fisher Architectural Records, Western History Department, Denver Public Library. Neusteter Archive. Colorado Historical Society.
Building Permit Applications. Western History Department, Denver Public Library.
"Max Neusteter", Enterprise Unlimited - Radio Show #50, KLZ Radio, July 10, 1949.

Appraisal of Three Murals by Vance Kirkland at Neusteter's, Hugh A. Grant, curator, Vance Kirkland Studio, 1987.

Denver Post: 5 September 1924
7 September 1924

Rocky Mountain News: 8 January 1950
15 January 1961

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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 of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Colorado Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Under 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	3	5	0	0	6	4	0	4	3	9	9	3	0	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1 thru 7, except the Westerly 5 feet of Lot 7, Block 139, East Denver.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundaries as described in legal description include the 1924 building and the 1950 addition.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Merrill Ann Wilson, A.I.A., Historical Architect
organization N/A date 7/8/87
street & number 526 Franklin Street telephone (303) 377-1970
city or town Denver state Colorado zip code 80218

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bands of Chicago-type windows (except the central window is double hung instead of fixed as in the classic Chicago window). The Denver Post on September 7, 1924 described in the new building as ". . . virtual palace" and the ". . . finest exclusive women's wear store in the country rising in imposing grandeur on Sixteenth Street" and ". . . the street display windows are the most beautiful in America." It was the only major department store built in the 1920's in Denver. Stylistically, the building is unique in Denver. The Commercial Style has few surviving examples due to the tremendous amount of demolition which has occurred in the central business district in Denver. The design of the arcade show windows is unusual and unprecedented in Denver and the entire Rocky Mountain region. It is part of a very important but diminished group of historic commercial buildings lining several blocks of Sixteenth Street. The building has maintained both its architectural integrity and its integrity of location and setting. The changes on the exterior are confined to the storefronts and are easily reversible, and the 1950 addition will be rehabilitated to be compatible in design with the original building.

The founder of Neusteter's was Max Neusteter who came to Colorado from St. Louis for his health. He was joined by his brother Meyer and they opened a small women's clothing store in 1911 in the Hughes Building, which was later incorporated in the 1924 structure. The business grew rapidly and in the post-World War I prosperity they planned and built a major new store in 1923-24 with the prominent Denver architects, Fisher and Fisher. Max Neusteter died a year after the new building was completed in 1925, and the family continued in business through three generations. The family quickly achieved social prominence in Denver society and Max Neusteter was known for his philanthropy and leadership in the Jewish community. He was instrumental in establishing the National Jewish Hospital in Denver.

As a retail establishment, in the historic period (1924-1937), Neusteter's was known as the most fashionable and exclusive store selling women's wear, from shoes and hats to dresses and furs. The concept of a store just for women was unusual when the store was founded. In 1924, when the present building was built, the Neusteter Company had been in business for fourteen years and had become a major retailing establishment in a group of about six major retailers in Denver. All the retailers were located within a few blocks along Sixteenth Street. Neusteter's outlived all but about two of its competitors in retailing on Sixteenth Street, and it was the only company to remain in family ownership in Denver throughout its years of operation from 1911 to 1985.