

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED NOV 6 1978  
DATE ENTERED MAR 12 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC  
Mid-Continent Life Building  
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
1400 Classen Drive  
CITY, TOWN  
Oklahoma City  
STATE  
Oklahoma  
VICINITY OF  
CODE  
40  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
No. 5  
COUNTY  
Oklahoma  
CODE  
109

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	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input 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  
Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company  
STREET & NUMBER  
1400 Classen Drive (Box 60269)  
CITY, TOWN  
Oklahoma City  
VICINITY OF  
STATE  
Oklahoma 73106

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the County Clerk  
STREET & NUMBER  
Oklahoma County Courthouse  
CITY, TOWN  
Oklahoma City  
STATE  
Oklahoma

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Special Mid-Continent Survey  
DATE  
1978  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Oklahoma Historical Society  
CITY, TOWN  
Oklahoma City  
STATE  
Oklahoma  
\_FEDERAL  STATE \_COUNTY \_LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company Building - started in 1926 and completed in 1927 at a cost of \$300,000 - a fine example of classical architecture, inside and out. The four-story structure faces south from a slight elevation, measures 150 feet east-west with a depth of 70 feet. Its formal balustraded entrance portico, supported by four massive Corinthian columns, spans the second and third levels. Three broad flights of stone steps lead up to the porch. Ground level of the four-story building (it has no basement) contains the vaults, files, office equipment, and service facilities.

The second level is the main "business" floor of the building. Once through the massive bronze doors one is greeted by the Mid-Continent Life insignia worked out in colored tile in the center of the main lobby. The mosaic includes the earth, the blue sky, and drifting clouds - "representing things that endure the test of time," according to a company brochure - nestled in the cradling words, MID-CONTINENT LIFE. The lobby itself is rich with Italian marble. (Floors are of Alabama marble, exterior walls of selected white limestone.) The slabs forming the marble columns are each of one piece. The ceiling is tastefully ornate. Original electrical fixtures in the lobby are of hand-hammered bronze.

A marble staircase, with bronze balustrade and mahogany hand-rail, leads from the main lobby to the third floor and most of the company offices. Interior finish throughout the three upper floors (the building also accommodates two penthouses) features quality Honduran mahogany, especially in the president's reception room, private office, and directors' room. Each room is paneled from a single large tree, the panels sawed in two and across and matched to the center.

Mid-Continent Life has remained in the Stuart family and a conscious attempt has been made to maintain, protect, and preserve the building that houses it.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES    1926-1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT    Layton, Hicks and Forsythe

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company was organized in 1909 in Muskogee, Oklahoma. In 1916, R. T. Stuart became president and promptly moved the relatively small, conservative company to Oklahoma City. Throughout the following decade growth was steady and substantial - its insurance in force climbing from \$3,216,413 in 1916 to \$37,320,048 in 1926. And in that year the decision was made to give Mid-Continent a more suitable home office.

A site was chosen between two small city parks just north and west of the downtown business district and the city's finest residential area. (This still handsome section is now being protected as the Heritage Hills Historic Preservation District.) Solomon Layton, Oklahoma's best known and perhaps most influential architect, drew up the design for the impressively classical structure (cf. No. 7) and spotted it on a slight ridge that was the highest elevation in the city at that time.

Ground was broken May 10, 1926. Construction was completed - and properly celebrated - exactly one year later, May 10, 1927. (The cornerstone had been laid, also with appropriate ceremony, November 3, 1926.) Pat Neff, former governor of Texas and a friend of Texas-born Stuart, was the guest of honor. William J. Pettee, Oklahoma City pioneer business man and '89er, headed the reception committee for a gala banquet attended by some 700 people. The following day the Oklahoma Bankers Association, then in convention in the capital city, came out in a body at noon for an "old time barbecue on the spacious grounds." After that the doors of the new building were thrown open to the public and as many as 35,000 are said to have inspected it.

In the 51 years since then the history of both building and company has been relatively uneventful. The company has continued to grow steadily and is today one of the state's largest. As for the building, it has stood virtually unchanged, but for routine modernizations of heating and cooling, lighting, communications, and the like. Its sternly classical lines are as handsome as when constructed, softened only by the growth of shrubs and trees.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- "Mid-Continent Greets Visitors in Costly New Home," The Daily Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, May 8, 1927
- "Mid-Continent Quarters Represent Yearsof Planning," The Daily Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, May 8, 1927
- Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company, a company-produced booklet, c. 1927

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Oklahoma City Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 minute series

UTM REFERENCES

A 14 6 3,3 7,4 0 3,9 2,7 4,3 9

B                              

C                              

D                              

E                              

F                              

G                              

H                              

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 4-8 and Lot "B" in Block 10 in Classen's West Highland Park Addition, recorded plat of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

DATE

June 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

# 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

TITLE

*Harry L. Reysree Ph.D.*

DATE

10-27-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3/12/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: Bill Lebowich

DATE

March 15, 1979

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Mid-Continent Life Building

Addendum . . . .

The Mid-Continent building is an excellent example of Neo-Classical architecture, conceived by one of the state's most influential architects to date. Sol Layton practiced architecture in Oklahoma for over 40 years, designing more than a hundred public, educational, and commercial buildings, a majority of which still stand. In his history of the construction industry in Oklahoma, Walter Nashert calls Layton "the daddy architect, one whose work stood alone, Oklahoma's greatest architect," who designs have withstood the test of the years.

Attention is called to two pertinent enclosures.

(1) The Buildings of Solomon Andrew Layton by Mary Jo Nelson is a recent monograph on the architect. It dramatizes the scope and enduring qualities of his professional efforts.

(2) The architectural description of the building is by Bill E. Fewler, III, Senior Preservation Architect. It details the classic features Layton blended together to create this impressive commercial structure . . . almost identical in appearance, curiously enough, to the handsome classic building that houses the Oklahoma Historical Society.

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Mid-Continent Life Building

Addendum . . .

An example of Neo-Classicism architecture, the Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company building consists of a ground floor, or Podium, first and second floors, and a third floor, or Attic. Exterior building material is light gray limestone, which is pierced on all levels with large window openings. Orientation of the front of the structure is to the south from a slight rise in the terrain. A wide entry concrete sidewalk broken with three series of steps leads to the grand entry stair of two flights. A balustrade caps the entrance portico which projects out from the face of the building and is supported by 4 free-standing, 2-story Corinthian columns. Stone of the Podium is the first level and continue to the top of the building. Two story fluted, single and coupled pilasters start at the first level and terminate at the entablature. Decoration occurs in the frieze in the form of carved wreaths and in the spandrels between the first level ceiling and second level window sills. Single and coupled pilasters appear again at the Attic level with more carved wreaths in the frieze of the top entablature. A heavily enriched parapet occurs on the projected front of the building but is omitted on each side and on all the rest of the remaining parapets. The light gray limestone is typical for all exterior elevations of the building.

By: Bill E. Feavler, AIA  
Senior Preservation Architect  
2-14-79

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Mid-Continent Life Building

Addendum . . .

The Mid-Continent Life Building is significant architecturally, as detailed in No. 7, and commercially for the age and character of the business it houses. The structure itself dates from 1926-1927 and is a notable example of classic architecture as created by the state's best known and perhaps more influential architect. It has been preserved virtually in mint condition in the half-century-plus since then.

As for the company, Mid-Continent dates back to 1909, two years after Oklahoma achieved statehood. It is the state's oldest home-grown insurance company, among its top three in size, and generally recognized as a solid, conservative, service-oriented firm that has contributed significantly over the years to the soundness and stability of the insurance industry in Oklahoma.