orm No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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**DATE ENTERED** 

MAR 1 2 1979

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#### **1** NAME HISTORIC Mid-Continent Life Building AND/OR COMMON **2 LOCATION STREET & NUMBER** 1400 Classen Drive NOT FOR PUBLICATION CITY, TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT No. 5 Oklahoma City VICINITY OF COUNTY CODE 109 STATE CODE Oklahoma Oklahoma hО CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY **OWNERSHIP** STATUS **PRESENT USE** DISTRICT PUBLIC \_AGRICULTURE \_\_MUSEUM X\_PRIVATE EUILDING(S) \_\_UNOCCUPIED \_\_PARK \_\_\_STRUCTURE \_\_вотн \_\_EDUCATIONAL \_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE \_\_\_SITE PUBLIC ACQUISITION ACCESSIBLE \_\_ENTERTAINMENT \_\_\_RELIGIOUS \_\_\_OBJECT XYES: RESTRICTED IN PROCESS \_\_GOVERNMENT \_\_SCIENTIFIC .....BEING CONSIDERED \_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED \_INDUSTRIAL \_\_TRANSPORTATION \_\_\_MILITARY \_\_NO \_\_OTHER: **4 OWNER OF PROPERTY** NAME Mid-Continent Life Insurance Company STREET & NUMBER 1400 Classen Drive (Box 60269) CITY, TOWN STATE Oklahoma City Oklahoma 73106 VICINITY OF **5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION** COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the County Clerk STREET & NUMBER Oklahoma County Courthouse CITY, TOWN STATE Oklahoma City Oklahoma **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS** TITLE Special Mid-Continent Survey DATE \_\_\_FEDERAL XSTATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL 1978 DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Oklahoma Historical Society CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE Oklahoma

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CON	IDITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK	DNE
X_EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED		CRIGINAL	SITE
GOOD	RUINS	ALTERED	MOVED	DATE
FAIR	UNEXPOSED			

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 greated 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 tabtefully ornate. Original electrical fixtures in the lobby are of hand-hammered bronze.

A marble staircase, with bronze ballustrade and mahogany handrial, 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	AF	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899		EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
<b>X</b> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
	•	INVENTION		
SPECIFIC DAT	<sup>ES</sup> 1926-1927	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT Layton, Hicks	and Forsythe

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#### 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.

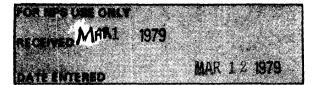
Ground was broken May 10, 1926. Construction was completed - and properly celebrated - exactly one year later, May 10, 1927. (The cornerstone had been laid, also with appropriate ceremony, November 3, 1926.) Pat Neff, former governor of Texas and a friend of Texas-born Stuart, was the guest of honor. 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 BIBLIOGRAPHI	CAL REFE	RENCES	n an	na National States -
"Mid-Continent Greets Visit		ly New Home,"	The Daily Oklah	oman,
Oklahoma City, May 8, "Mid-Continent Quarters Rep		sof Planning.	' The Daily Okla	noman.
Oklahoma City, May 8,	1927	and the second		<del>Marine Construction</del> -
Mid-Continent Life Insurance	company,	a company-prod	luced booklet, c	. 1927
<b>10</b> GEOGRAPHICAL DATA				
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY	acre			4
QUADRANGLE NAME	ty Quadrang	1e	QUADRANGLE SCALE	7.5 minute series
	2,7]43,9] ING , , , , , , ,	B	STING NORT	rHING
	<u>i   i   </u>	FL		
GLI LIIII LI	1 1 1 1	н		
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots 4-8 and Lot "B" in El recorded plat of Oklahoma			Highland Park Ad	dition,
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIE	S FOR PROPERT	IES OVERLAPPING	STATE OR COUNTY BO	UNDARIES
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
<b>11</b> FORM PREPARED BY				
Kent Ruth, Deputy			DATE	
Oklahoma Historical Society	•	·····	June 1978	
STREET & NUMBER Historical Building			TELEPHONE 405/884-51	156
CITY OR TOWN			STATE	·
Oklahoma City			Oklahoma	
12 STATE HISTORIC PRESE THE EVALUATED SIG				JN
NATIONAL	SNIFICANCE		LOCAL	
As the designated State Historic Preservation				blig Low 99 665) 1
hereby nominate this property for inclusion criteria and procedures set forth by the Nation	in the National R			
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGN	TURE	2(	<u>}</u>	
TITLE HASSA	Denk	e h. h		-27-78
FOR NPS USE ONLY	VIC IN ALL	N THE NATIONAL	EGISTER	_
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERT	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			-lu-la
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	U)/I	with	DATE	5/2/7
ATTEST: Bill Lolooval		<u> </u>	DATE MO	relit 1878
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION		1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1.		

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

## Mid-Continent Life Building

Addendur . . .

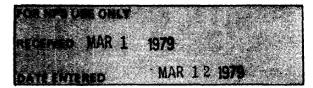
The Mid-Continent building is an excellent example of Neo-Classic architecture, conceived by one of the state's most influential architects to date. Sol Layton procticed architecture in Oklahoma for over 40 years, designing more than a hundred public, educational, and commercial buildings, a rejority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

ittention is called to two pertinent enclosures.

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

(2) The erchitectural description of the building is by Bill E. Feavler, II., Senior Preservation Architect. It details the classic features Leyton blended together to concrete this impressive correctial structure ... almost identical in appearance, curiously enough, to the bandsome classic building that bouses the Oklahoms Historical Society. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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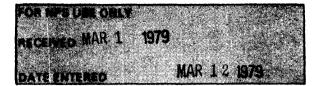
## Mid-Continent Life Building

Addendum . . .

In 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. I wide entry concrete sidewalk broken with three series of steps leads to the grand entry stair of two flights. A balustrade caps the entrance protice which projects out from the face of the building and is supported by 4 free-standing, 2-story Corinthian columns. Stone of the Podiur is the first level and continue to the top of the building. Two story fluted, single and coupled pilosters start at the first level and terminate st the entablature. Decoration occurs in the frienze in the form of carved wreathes and in the spandrels between the first lovel ceiling and second level window sills. Single and coupled pilosters appear again at the ittic level with more carved wreathes in the frieze of the top entable ture. becvily enriched parapet occurs on the projected front of the building but is critted 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. Peavler, AIA Senior Preservation Architect 2-14-79

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** 

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

### <u>Mid-Continent Life Building</u>

'ddendum . . .

The Nid-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 empony, Mid-Continent dates back to 1909, two years after Ohlohoma 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.