

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet

Item number Various

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Public Service of Oklahoma Building.

Location: 600 S. Main^{St.}, Tulsa, Oklahoma. 74119

Owner of Property: Transok Pipeline Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Public Service Company of Oklahoma.

Description:

This building is constructed of reinforced concrete, steel frames and steel window frames covered by light grey Bedford limestone. The windows on the ground floor are large enough to accommodate displays of merchandise, as the company was also in the retail business in 1929. The stylized arch design of these windows reflect the Gothic predecessor of Art Deco. Above the first floor, the windows are inset, accenting the piers which rise in an unbroken line to the roof giving the building the vertical thrust so important to Art Deco design. The spandrels are decorated with stepped-back geometrical designs, painted at the top to add vertical emphasis.

One of the most unusual features of the building is its beautiful nighttime illumination by a series of strategically placed lights. The architect Arthur M. Atkinson, A.I.A., was also a professional engineer and was responsible for the implementation of the request made by the client for this feature which was to showcase its product—electricity. The torch shaped holders of these lights are decorated with Art Deco motifs of chevrons and stepped-back geometrical patterns.

At present the building is being renovated and it is the intention of the owner to maintain its Art Deco integrity. Construction materials have made it impossible to take a full photograph of the building at this time. However, a copy of a photograph taken in 1950 and printed in Tulsa Art Deco is included with current photos of one of the entrances and the torches. The entrances to the building are covered by canopies which were the result of increased automobile use and patrons being dropped off at curbside. The "L" shaped lobby is another popular feature of Art Deco buildings.

When completed in 1929 the building consisted of five stories and a basement with ample foundation and columns for three more stories. In 1961, two inset floors were added, one for additional office space, the other to make room for the mechanical equipment needed for the new air conditioning equipment. Fortunately, these two floors are so deeply inset that they do not intrude into the building's facade. The cost of the building in 1929 was \$425,000.00, it is 80' x 140'.

Significant:

This building was the third Art Deco construction in Tulsa. (The first built in 1927 is no longer standing). The designer, Joseph R. Koberling Jr., had just returned from a year in Europe where he had been on a travelling scholarship to study the various European architectural movement. He was repelled by the "soulless architecture" of the then contemporary German Bauhaus style. "It was", he said, "so against the traditional joyfulness of architecture."¹ The building is thus a significant representation of a philosophical view of Art Deco.

Another significant feature is the use of electric lights as a decorative element, this was a first in Tulsa. The architects reputation as a modern lighting expert originated with this building.

The inclusion in the design of display space on the first floor for fans, sweepers, electric waffle irons, lamps and electrical appliances and in the windows

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for washing machines, refrigerators and electrical ranges is significant of the importance of the retail trade to the P.S.O. in 1929. This practice was later eliminated by Oklahoma statutes.

The need for larger quarters for the company is supported by the increase in electric light and power connections which rose from 2,615 in 1915 to 31,121 in 1928.

Acreage: Approx. 1 acre

Quadrangle Name: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Verbal Boundary Description: Block 162, Lot 1.

UTM: 15 231170 4004540 - *connected to 1929 US map.*