

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

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



82

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cain's Coffee Building

and/or common 1 W. 12th Building

2. Location

street & number 1 N.W. 12th Street ___ not for publication

city, town Oklahoma City ___ vicinity of congressional district 5

state Oklahoma code 40 county Oklahoma code 109

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name One N.W. 12th Street, LTD.

street & number 7521 N. Classen

city, town Oklahoma City ___ vicinity of state Oklahoma

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Oklahoma County Courthouse

street & number 320 Robert S. Kerr

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cains Coffee Comany Building, located at 1 W. 12th Street, is a five-story brick and tile structure measuring 120' x 130'. The building, which is in good condition, consists of two parts: the main building, constructed in 1919, and the lean-to, added during the 1940s.

The front of the building is on the south side, facing 12th Street. The exterior walls are covered with a white glazed-tile, a common material used to visually improve industrial buildings during the first few decades of the century. Diamond-shaped blue tiles were added on each level for visual variety. Except for a few tiles near the west end around the loading dock, the exterior is in remarkably good condition.

The south side exterior is divided into seven sections by pilasters, which extend from ground level to varying heights above the top of the building. The two end sections consist of layered pilasters with setbacks at the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd levels, and five groupings of three 2' x 6' windows. The five middle sections consist of pilasters and 6' x 12' windows. All of the windows on the south side are metal frame and sealed. Installed during the last remodelling in the 1970s, they replaced metal industrial windows. On ground level in the center of the south side is an entryway which has recently been added. It consists of a metal awning and metal posts on either side.

The east side of the main building appears much as it did originally. This side, like the south side, is faced with white glazed-tile. The only modernizations are three 6' x 12' windows on the second level. The other floors still have the old metal industrial windows. One other alteration is in the center section on the ground level, where a chute opening has been enclosed with panels. The tile on this side also is in excellent condition.

The west side of the main building, faced with painted brick, has one industrial window on the north one-story offset, six 3' x 3' industrial windows along the northwest corner, a metal door on the ground level, and a loading dock with two doors near the southwest corner. On the top levels are two 6' x 12' windows, which were installed during the last remodelling. A similar window measuring 6' x 8' is on the lower level at the southwst corner. The entire side has been painted a beige color and a decorative stripe of brown has been added for highlight.

(continued on attached page)

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 type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1919-1980 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cains Coffee Company Building, located next to the Santa Fe tracks on W. 12th Street, represents three significant links to Oklahoma City's past. One, it is the best preserved large manufacturing and warehouse building in the old industrial district of Oklahoma City. Second, it is one of only two surviving plants of the original Cains Coffee Company, an important regional firm founded in Oklahoma City in 1919. And third, with its side-tracks still visible, it represents the once-vital interrelationship of railroad accessibility and industry in Oklahoma City.

From the first day of settlement, railroad tracks determined the location of manufacturing and distribution firms in Oklahoma City. For two decades this meant that most companies located near the Santa Fe tracks between Grand Avenue (now Sheridan) on the south and 2nd Street on the north. As the economy expanded and new railroads entered the city, this pattern was followed. By 1919 and the post-World War I building boom, new and larger industrial structures were being built along the KATY tracks as far east as Oklahoma Avenue, along the Rock Island tracks as far west as Walker Avenue, and along the Santa Fe tracks as far north as 13th Street. These three ribbons of industrial development, taken collectively, were commonly known as the "warehouse district" or "industrial district."

With the local economy booming and workers returning from the war, a group of investors elected to construct a large industrial building on the far north side of town. After paying \$15,000 for nine lots at the intersection of 12th Street and the Santa Fe tracks, the company borrowed \$75,000 and constructed a five-story brick building. With a basic design typical of industrial buildings erected during that period, the structure's only unusual feature was the white glazed tile on the exterior walls. (Popular in 1919, this material has since become a rarity; no other building in Oklahoma City is known to be faced with this kind of tile.)

From 1919 to 1941 the building housed a variety of enterprises, all of which needed direct railroad connections. The first industrial occupant was the Sifers Candy Company, manufacturers and wholesale dealers of candy. In 1923 Sifers was followed by the V. V. Campbell Company, manufacturers of extract, and the Blatz Brewery. These companies remained only until 1926, when the Sigmon Furniture Company leased the structure. As a Sealy Mattress licensee, this company used the five-story building as a mattress manufacturing and wholesale distribution center.

(continued on attached page)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Interview, William Morgan Cain, founder of Cains Coffee Company, June 2, 1980
 Interview, Frank Maddox, employee of Cains since 1942, June 3, 1980
 Polk's Directory, Oklahoma City, 1920-1942
 Warranty Deed and Mortgage Records, Oklahoma County Courthouse, Oklahoma City

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property Circa 1 acre
 Quadrangle name Oklahoma City

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	4	6	3	5	0	0	0	3	9	2	7	2	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point 35' south and 25' east of the building's southeast corner, which is the point where the side track meets the curb, proceed
 (continued on attached page)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debbie K. Blackburn

organization Local History Group date June 12, 1980

street & number 118 N. W. 22nd telephone 405-525-0656

city or town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

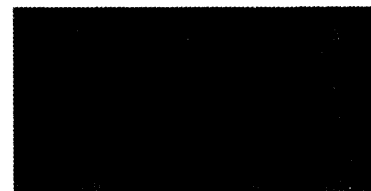
national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature C. Metcalf

title _____ date 12-4-81

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>2/4/82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number

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The north side of the building has a one-story offset, which extends the entire length of the building. The west end of this offset is painted brick; the other end is faced with white glazed-tile. The horizontal lines of the four upper levels are broken by a smokestack, located on the east end of the building, and an elevator shaft, located mid-way along the north side. The smoke stack is faced with the white glazed-tile. The exterior walls of the four top levels on the north side are painted brick with horizontal rows of steel-sash industrial windows. Most of the window panes have been painted.

The lean-to garage, which abuts the main building on the north side, is a red pre-cast block structure measuring 100' east and west, 30' north and south, and 12' up and down. The north side is unfinished block with a loading door on the east end and four 2' x 2' windows along the center section. The west end has an overhead garage door, which is in bad condition. The east end is painted brick.

The building is surrounded by a parking lot on the west, 12th Street on the south, railroad sidings on the east, and an alley on the north.

The interior of the first level has been remodelled with partitions, windows, and plywood doors. Just inside the front entrance is a two-story entryway with a modern drop light fixture. To the east and west are two narrow hallways which lead to a series of offices. The second floor, reached via a metal stairway in the entryway, also has been remodelled for office space. At both ends of these halls are stairways, which are original. The upper floors are in an advanced state of deterioration. The walls are unfinished and each floor is covered with rubble.

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Like countless other businesses during the early 1930s, Sigmon Furniture Company succumbed to the economic depression. In 1935, however, with financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a new mattress manufacturer moved into the building. Perhaps as a part of its contractual agreement, the FERA moved its local Geological Department into the white structure. In 1936 this federal office was joined by a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) motor repair shop. With this federal cooperation the building remained open and in good condition until it was deeded to Oklahoma City University in 1941. At that time the college leased it to a young and expanding local firm, the Cains Coffee Company.

In 1919, as the five-story building at 1 W. 12th was being constructed, William Morgan Cain was in the process of buying the local branch of the Western Pacific Tea Company, his employer for the previous five years. With a \$38,000 loan from the First National Bank, the aggressive young man purchased the firm's machinery, inventory, and contracts, moved the company to 204 W. 2nd Street (on the Rock Island tracks), and installed his first roasting ovens. Under Cain's guidance, the company imported raw coffee beans through New Orleans, then roasted, packaged, and shipped the finished product to retail distributors. By 1925 Cain was ready for a new building, which he constructed at 512 W. 2nd (on the tracks).

Through hard work and conservative growth, Cains Coffee Company survived and even prospered during the 1930s. By 1941, with the demands of an intensifying world war, and with new retail outlets in Tulsa, William Cain needed a larger plant for his operations; he found it at 1 W. 12th Street on the Santa Fe tracks.

To accomodate their specialized operations, Cain's employees made several alterations in the twenty-two year old structure. One modification was installing a chute on the east side of the building through which they could load packaged coffee and tea into railroad cars. On the west side they added a door and loading dock for tracks, while in the basement the company used existing heating ducts to install furnaces for dehydrating garlic and onions.

The layout of the upper floors was arranged for the coffee, tea, and spice business. On the first floor the company housed management offices, coffee packaging machines, and loading conveyors; the second floor served as the tea and spice packaging center; the third floor was used for storage and grinding; the fourth floor was filled with roasting ovens and stacks of raw coffee beans; and the fifth floor was used for bulk storage.

With this functional facility, the operations of Cains Coffee Company expanded to Texas, Kansas, Missouri, and Louisiana. By the 1950s the company owned warehouses in New Orleans and Corpus Christie, packaged produce in other states, and maintained dozens of sales offices. A sales force averaging from 65 to 70 men at all times provided the market for this increased production.

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Continuation sheet 2

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As often happens, success attracted larger corporations. In 1961 Cains Coffee Company, a family owned and operated firm since 1919, was sold to Nestles Company. With new capital, a more extensive distribution system, and new management, Cains Coffee Company moved again. This time the move was to a new factory located between Oklahoma City and Edmond. The building at 1 W. 12th, home of the Cains empire during its most active years, was abandoned.

The tile-clad building remained vacant until the mid-1970s, when the Western Waterproofing Company remodeled and moved into the first floor area. The upper floors, however, have remained vacant to the present time, a condition which has accelerated deterioration.

Paralleling the decline of the bulding's utilization has been the decline of the old industrial and warehouse district along the railroad tracks. Beginning in the mid-1960s with the completion of Interstate Highways 40 and 35, manufacturers and distributors have abandoned the old warehouse district for new industrial parks in the suburbs of Oklahoma City. This "ribbon" development along the superhighways reflects the new importance of trucking and the declining dependance on railroad shipping.

Today, the old Cains Coffee Company Building stands vacant, its past usefulness evident in the still-sound walls and beautiful white tile. No building from the old industrial and warehouse district of Oklahoma City has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing the Cains Building on the Register would draw attention to the old warehouse district, provide economic incentive to preserve and renovate a historic structure, and perpetuate the memory of an important local company which rose from rags to riches on the shoulders of a determined individual.

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155' north to a point parallel with the north side of the lean-to garage. Then proceed 165' west across the side tracks and along the north side of the garage to a point 10' beyond the west side of the main building. Then proceed 150' south along a line parallel to the west side of the building to the curb. Then proceed 160' east along the curb to the point of departure.