

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For HCRI use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic

and/or common Frisco Building

2. Location

street & number 906 Olive Street

___ not for publication

city, town St. Louis

___ vicinity of

~~___ congressional district~~

state Missouri

code

29

county

City of St. Louis

code 510

3. Classification

Category

___ district

building(s)

___ structure

___ site

___ object

Ownership

___ public

private

___ both

Public Acquisition

N/A in process

___ being considered

Status

occupied

___ unoccupied

___ work in progress

Accessible

yes: restricted

___ yes: unrestricted

___ no

Present Use

___ agriculture

commercial

___ educational

___ entertainment

___ government

___ industrial

___ military

___ museum

___ park

___ private residence

___ religious

___ scientific

___ transportation

___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Burnham Missouri Development Corporation

As Agent for a Limited Partnership to be formed.

street & number 111 East Wacker Drive

city, town Chicago

___ vicinity of

state

IL 60601

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street & number Market Street at Tucker Boulevard

city, town St. Louis

state

MO 63101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Architectural Survey of the

title Central Business District, St. Louis has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date October 1975; revised, April 1977 and Feb. 1982 ___ federal ___ state ___ county local

depository for survey records Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

706 Chestnut Street, Room 1217

city, town St. Louis

state

MO 63101

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National Park Service**

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2. Missouri State Historical Survey
October 1982
Historic Preservation Program
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City,

State

MO 65102

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Frisco Building is a thirteen story office building constructed in 1903-04 on the southwest corner of Ninth and Olive Streets in downtown St. Louis. It was designed by architects Eames & Young as general headquarters for the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company. A six bay addition to the west (designed by the same architects) was constructed in 1905-06. The annex faithfully duplicates the style and materials of the principal building.

Speckled brown brick trimmed with Bedford stone and cream-colored terra cotta cover the building's steel frame construction. (The brick was supplied by the McNeil Pressed Brick Company.) The east facade extends fourteen bays along Ninth Street terminating at an alley. On Olive Street four small recessed bays over the main entrance originally were symmetrically balanced by six-bay units on each side; the 1905 annex, however, extended the building an additional six bays to the west. (Photo #1) Uninterrupted slender piers articulate the eight story shaft and vertically align with the rusticated base and the attic story. Ornament is used with restraint as vermiculated bands on base piers and as simple cartouches on spandrels of the shaft. At the attic story, cartouches bear the Frisco monogram, "FS". Rectangular panels of stylized ornament on the cornice sustain the vertical rhythm established by the piers below. A comparison of Photo #1 with a view of the building taken circa 1909 (Photo #2) indicates that only the first story has been significantly altered by the application of black "marble" in the 1950s. Perhaps at the same time the second story arch over the main entrance on Olive Street was replaced by small vertical piers.

The plan of the principal building employs an internal light court opening to an alley on the south. A set of original plans (dated January 1903) suggest that floor plans of the upper six stories were designed specifically for the use of the Frisco Railroad. The lower six stories were divided into conventional office space. On the ground floor, stores opened onto Olive and Ninth Streets. City Directories indicate that over the years the railroad occupied various floors -- sometimes taking over entire stories and at other times sharing floors with other firms. An historical photograph of the first floor lobby confirms descriptions published at the time of construction and notations on the floor plan. Features included a mosaic marble floor with Frisco insignia, white marble wall facing and filigree metal elevator cages. None of the original materials remain and elements of the lobby's plan have also been modified, most likely when the exterior store fronts were sheathed circa 1950.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" 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 1903-04; 1905-06 **Builder/Architect** Eames & Young, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Frisco Building qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C and is eligible under the following areas of significance: TRANSPORTATION: The principal building and annex were constructed between 1903 and 1906 as corporate headquarters of the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company, the second oldest rail company west of the Mississippi River. At the time the building was under construction, the Frisco System was experiencing its greatest period of growth under the leadership of Benjamin F. Yoakum, President and Chairman of the Board. A few years after the annex was completed in 1906 the Frisco System was reported to be the largest rail system under single control in the country. In addition to its contributions to the economy of St. Louis, the Frisco lines stimulated the growth and development of southwest Missouri and parts of Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma (among other states) where railroad towns were settled and commerce and industry generated. The Frisco System occupied the building for nearly eighty years; ARCHITECTURE: Designed by architects Eames & Young, the Frisco Building holds a significant place in the evolution of St. Louis' commercial architectural style. The building's discreet use of ornament and steamlined pier and spandrel system which represented an advance over nineteenth century skyscraper design idioms were features noted by The Architectural Record in 1908. Exterior alterations have been confined to first story store fronts, leaving the building in near-original condition.

The origin of the Frisco Railroad Company belongs to a compelling mid-nineteenth century American dream of an Iron Horse starting its "journey towards the setting sun" to span a continent between St. Louis and San Francisco.¹ The earliest effort to realize this dream appeared in 1849 when the Pacific Railroad Company, the first steam rail west of the Mississippi River, was chartered by the Missouri Legislature to connect St. Louis to the western boundary of the state. However, long before this was achieved the South-West Branch (a subsidiary of the Pacific) was organized in 1852 to extend from the main line into southwest Missouri.² An independent corporation by 1866, the South-West Branch became the nucleus of the Frisco line which was organized in 1876 under its full corporate name: the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway Company. (At that time the Frisco's former parent company, the Pacific Railroad, was also re-organized and became the Missouri Pacific Railway Company.)³

Although the Frisco's aspirations of building a transcontinental trunk line linking St. Louis and San Francisco along the 35th parallel never materialized, the company nonetheless made significant contributions to settlement and commercial development of sections of the southwest, south central and southeast United States. In 1896, under the leadership of Vice President and General Manager Benjamin F. Yoakum (1859-1929), the reorganized Frisco line embarked upon one of the west's most phenomenal periods of rail growth. Known in rail history as "Yoakum's Dream", the Frisco System's rapid expansion more than quadrupled the trackage between 1897 and 1904

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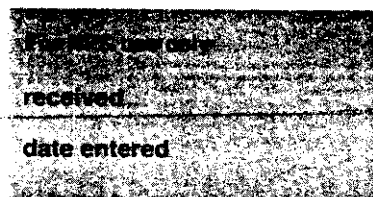
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while pursuing Yoakum's empire-building policy of vigorous acquisition. Elected President in 1900 and Chairman of the Board in 1903, Texas-born Yoakum by 1911 had achieved almost every feature of his projected "dream".⁴ Within a few years after Yoakum had allied the Frisco with the Rock Island Railroad in 1905, the combined railroads were reported to own 17,000 miles of track which constituted the "greatest railroad system under single control up to that time." Yoakum himself was regarded as the pre-eminent leader of the day in transportation development.⁵

As a consequence of the Frisco's rapid expansion at the turn of the century, a search for new corporate headquarters in St. Louis was required. Although as recently as June 1901, the Frisco had signed a ten-year lease to occupy three floors of the Commercial Building at Sixth and Olive Streets, within a year negotiations were underway to secure additional office space. Isaac T. Cook, known as the "Napoleon of office building construction in St. Louis,"⁶ was called upon to relocate the Frisco in office space which would allow the railroad to unite its new lines under one roof. By November 1902, Cook had devised plans for a twelve story office building to be constructed for the Frisco System at a cost of \$700,000. The site for the new structure, fronting 120 feet on Olive Street and 109 feet on North Ninth Street, was considered one of the most desirable in downtown St. Louis. Diagonally opposite the Post Office, the parcel shared the block with Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge's 1890 design for the Bell Telephone corporate headquarters on Tenth and Olive Streets and was located across the street from the 1896 Century Building, "one of the most expensive office buildings in the West." At the time Corner Realty (a subsidiary of the Mercantile Trust Company) entered into a ninety-nine year lease with the Frisco Building Company for the lot, it was reported that the transaction represented a significant appreciation of downtown property. Corner Realty projected a net profit of \$625,000 from the lease, which provided for the demolition of the four-story Emilie Building on the lot, and for the construction of a modern, fireproof commercial/office building.⁷

The Frisco Building Company, organized by Isaac Cook, was incorporated in the State of Missouri November 13, 1902, with a capital stock of \$600,000. While the principal stockholders were Cook and members of his family, other investors of note included three men responsible for the design and construction of the new building: architects William S. Eames, Thomas C. Young and contractor James W. Black. On November 20, 1902, the Frisco Building Company contracted a twenty-five year lease with the Frisco Railroad for the Olive Street parcel and the projected thirteen story building. The lease stipulated an annual rent of \$75,000 to begin March 1, 1904, or earlier if the building were completed.

Announcement of initial plans for the Frisco Building was well covered by the St. Louis press in mid-November; in December The Builder, a local trade journal, reported in more detail. The building's twelve stories would reach the limit established by City Ordinance. Ground floor space was to be divided into stores "with special features, which will make them particularly attractive for the trade." It was also disclosed that special attention had been given both to window size, planned "extraordinarily large," and to the brick and terra cotta

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materials which were designed to "catch as little dirt as possible, in order to preserve a clean appearance under all circumstances." The Frisco System was expected to occupy about six floors initially, with the rest of the space "arranged in most desirable suites for general commercial purposes."⁸ Within a year after the Frisco Building was ready for occupancy, Eames & Young were commissioned to design a six-bay annex joining the building on the west. Earliest plans for the addition are dated May 1-August 16, 1905, although the building permit (estimating the cost at \$275,000) was not issued until September 1, 1905.

Singled out for discussion by The Architectural Record in 1908, Eames & Young's design for the Frisco Building was heralded as an example of a significant new direction in American commercial architecture and an indication that St. Louis was "participating in the general improvement of business buildings." The critic argued that while in the recent past skyscraper design had followed the convention of the classical column analogy (with base, shaft and capital), the surest course to a national American architecture required modification of the column analogy in order to "express more frankly what a skyscraper was, both in structure and function."⁹ The extent to which the architects of the Frisco Building improved upon the nineteenth century skyscraper convention demonstrated their ability to "accept an appropriate convention and yet find abundant room within its limits for free movement."¹⁰ In this way they avoided the pitfalls of excessive originality and buildings designed to "slap a man in the face." By treating the Frisco's facade as a unified screen exhibiting continuous vertical lines, eschewing indulgent ornament and eliminating a heavy-arched base, Eames & Young met the author's requirements for more "relevant" architectural ideas.

Eames & Young held a prestigious reputation both locally and nationally by the time they received the commission for the Frisco Building. Having formed a partnership in St. Louis in 1885, their designs included homes for the elite as well as important commercial buildings. In 1897, they were appointed architects by the U. S. Government for the first Federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, and Eames was serving on the national Executive Committee of the American Institute of Architects. A founder and charter member of the St. Louis Chapter of the AIA (1890), Eames served successive terms as President. In 1903, he was elected President of the national chapter of the AIA, succeeding Charles McKim. Eames served as the U. S. State Department delegate to the International Congress of Architects in Madrid in 1904 and in London in 1906. The firm's commissions outside Missouri included the U. S. Custom House, San Francisco; the U. S. Penitentiary, Atlanta; the Walker Building, Salt Lake City; the Rosenberg Library, Galveston; the New Washington Hotel and the Alaska Building in Seattle.

The Eames & Young building remained the corporate headquarters of the Frisco System for nearly eighty years although the company began to shift personnel to regional offices in the mid-1960s. In 1980, a merger of the Frisco with the Burlington Northern Railroad further reduced railroad occupancy of the building. At this writing, the Frisco Building is under contract for sale to Burnham Development Company of Chicago. Burnham's plans to renovate the building as Class A office space could bring St. Louis a much-needed model for revitalizing historic office buildings by the private sector.

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Footnotes

¹H. Craig Miner, The St. Louis-San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad: The Thirty-Fifth Parallel Project, 1853-1890 (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1972), p. 21.

²St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad Company, History of the St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco) Railway Company (St. Louis: St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company, c. 1962), pp. 4-5. (Mimeographed.)

³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴Ibid., pp. 18-21.

⁵St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 29 November 1929.

⁶The Builder, January 1907, n.p. A native of Ohio with a background in shoe sales, Cook (born 1871) settled in St. Louis in 1896 and engaged in real estate. Among other major buildings promoted by Cook were the Chemical, the Carleton and the Wright in St. Louis, and the Alaska Building in Seattle, described as "almost a counterpart of the Frisco."

⁷St. Louis Republic, 6 November 1902, part III, p. 1.

⁸The Builder, December 1902, n.p.

⁹William Herbert, "Some Business Buildings in St. Louis," The Architectural Record 23 (May 1908): 391.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 395.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Granite City, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

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

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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

D

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

E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Frisco Building is located in City Block 274; the building fronts approximately 160 feet on Olive Street and approximately 110 feet on North Ninth Street.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By © Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1982.

name/title Mary M. Stiritz, Research Associate

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 22 October 1982

street & number 706 Chestnut Street, Room 1217 telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO 63101

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

Director, Department of Natural Resources and
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

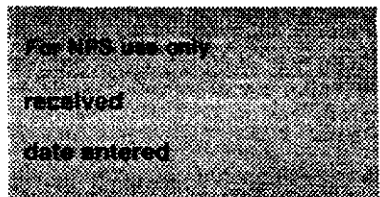
Attest

date

Chief of Registrar

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Builder, December 1902 and January 1907.

Davis Realty Development Co. Saint Louis, The Coming Giant of America. St. Louis: Davis Realty Development Co., 1909.

Herbert, William. "Some Business Buildings in St. Louis." The Architectural Record 23 (May 1908): 391-396.

Miner, H. Craig. The St. Louis-San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad: The Thirty-Fifth Parallel Project, 1853-1890. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1972.

St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 29 November 1929.

St. Louis Republic, 6 November 1902, part III, p. 1.

St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad Company. History of the St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco) Railway Company. St. Louis: St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad Company, c. 1962. (Mimeographed.)

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2. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey and Registration
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks & Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

December 22, 1982
314/751-4096

Missouri 65102



FRISCO BUILDING, St. Louis, MO
906 Olive Street

UTM Reference Points:

15/744160/4279110

Granite City, IL/MO Quadrangle
Scale, 1:24,000

MADISON CO
ST CLAIR CO

Brooklyn
(Lovejoy PO)

Municipal
Dock

Webster
Sch

Murphy
Park

Washington Technical

Post Office

MISSOURI
ILLINOIS

LEADS BRIDGE (TOL)

Mile
180

Photo Log:

Name of Property: Frisko Building

City or Vicinity: St. Louis [Independent City]

County: St. Louis [Independent City] State: MO

Photographer: Mary M. Stirtz (unless otherwise noted)

Date

Photographed: Oct. 1982 (unless otherwise noted)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 2. N (principal) and E elevations, facing SW.

2 of 2. N (principal) and E elevations, facing SW. Photocopy from Saint Louis, The Coming Giant of America (St. Louis: Davis Realty Development Co., 1909).





Conservative
Federal
Exchange

Conservative
Federal
Exchange

57

45th Street

45th Street