

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic The Palace Clothing Company Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1126-1128 GRAND AVE. not for publication

city, town Kansas City vicinity of

state Missouri code 29 county Jackson code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<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 Palace Associates

street & number 2520 Commerce Tower, 911 Main Street

city, town Kansas City vicinity of state Missouri 64105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall

street & number 414 East 12th Street

city, town Kansas City state Missouri 64105

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Landmarks Commission has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town Kansas City state Missouri 64105

## 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 mottled terra-cotta and tapestry brick, seven story (plus mezzanine) structure completed in December, 1924 was designed by Kansas City architect Frederic E. McIlvain (1873-1927).<sup>1</sup> Measuring 87 feet by 115 feet, the building extends four large bays on Grand Avenue and six large bays on Twelfth Street. Construction of the building is composite: the basic frame is of iron beams clad in concrete and a pan joist concrete floor. Roof type is flat with tar and gravel. (photo #1)

In 1972, The Palace Clothing Company Building was covered in gold anodized aluminum sheathing. Original spandrels were covered with black, metal grilles and canopies were constructed over the entrances on Grand Avenue and East Twelfth Street. To make an extra story of rental space, the mezzanine was floored in. Architects of the 1972 remodeling were R. Lindsay Hein and Uri Seiden Associates. Metropolitan Construction Company was the general contractor.<sup>2</sup> (photo #2)

The metal exterior skin has just recently been removed, revealing the 1924 facade which can be described as follows: A two story, commercial base is established by richly ornamented, terra-cotta faced piers that originate from polished, gray-rose granite bases. (photo #3) Above the second story, a belt course separates the commercial base from the remaining six story shaft. (photo #4) Above the belt course, the piers, which are edged with spiral colonnettes, terminate below a low, flat cornice.<sup>3</sup> (photo #5) Large, slightly recessed Chicago styled, tripartite windows articulate the south and east elevations and are separated by rectilinear, "diaper-work" spandrels. (photo #1) Recessed entryways articulate the street level on the east side of the structure. Details found in a photo of the 1924 facade that no longer exist are the balustrades of iron and brass, articulating the mezzanine level. (Photo #6)

### Exterior Condition:

see appendix A, pp. 1-2.

### Interior Condition:

Interior details have all but vanished under the extensive remodeling. The original drawings reveal that an arcade, mezzanine balcony and overall ceramic tile floor patterns were designed but have been destroyed or were never built.

### Site:

The Palace Clothing Company Building is adjacent to a parking structure to the north. Oppenstein Brothers Memorial Park is situated across an alley to the west.

# 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 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 1924 Builder/Architect Frederic E. McIlvain

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Palace Clothing Company Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places according to criteria A and C and is significant in the following areas: ARCHITECTURE: Designed in 1924 by Kansas City architect Frederic E. McIlvain, the seven story structure is one of the most expressive examples of Chicago style architecture in Kansas City because its form so clearly expresses the utilitarian and structural function of the building. By emphasizing openness and mass, the design also points to the elegance and flexibility of the "neutral cage". COMMERCE: The Palace Clothing Company, established in 1893 in Kansas City by Henry A. Guettel and Henry A. Auerbach<sup>4</sup> became one of the largest clothing stores of its kind in the West<sup>5</sup> and one of the nation's most outstanding stores merchandising men's and boy's clothing.<sup>6</sup> Since 1921, the business grew from a one and a half million dollar volume to more than six million dollars of business before the company closed its doors in 1964.

Iowa-born Henry A. Guettel (1866-1921), while working for a prominent wholesale clothier in Chicago, met his future brother-in-law and co-partner of the Palace Clothing Company, Henry A. Auerbach. It was in 1888 that Guettel and Auerbach formed a partnership and established the first Palace Clothing Company in Topeka, Kansas. Continually considering expansion, Guettel and Auerbach explored the business district in Kansas City and in 1893 purchased, coincidentally, the Palace Clothing Store, located at 909 Main. This became their first affiliate business. In 1921, they purchased the Ridge Property, which housed the Palace Clothing business and changed its name to the Palace Building. During those twenty-eight years, because continued growth necessitated substantial remodeling and expansion, the Palace Clothing Company had become one of the largest clothing stores in the country, with frontage of 275 feet. Guettel and Auerbach had also opened two more affiliate locations; one in Emporia, Kansas (1899) and another in St. Joseph, Missouri (1901).<sup>8</sup>

Auerbach had remained in Topeka managing the parent company, while Guettel was heralded "a great pioneer merchant of Kansas City."<sup>9</sup> Guettel had no peers as a merchant. Even after his death in 1921, when the Guettel family had purchased the Auerbach interest and Henry's son Arthur became president of the company, the Palace Clothing Company remained one of the most prosperous clothing businesses in Kansas City.<sup>10</sup>

In 1924, Arthur Guettel chose a new site for his business, because the Ninth Street area, unlike Grand Avenue was no longer the mercantile

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center of town. Situated on the northwest corner of Twelfth and Grand Street, the prestigious new building was located in an area of prominent retail merchandisers: Woolf Brothers; Emery, Bird, Thayer Company; the Jones Store Company and Rothchilds.

The Building Design

The seven story (plus mezzanine), mottled terra-cotta Palace Clothing Company building, designed by Frederic E. McIlvain, has its roots in the Chicago School of architecture. More pure than the Gumbel Building (John W. McKecknie, 1903-04), the structure is logical in plan and memorable for its simplicity and power. The dominance of glass and the mottled terra-cotta emphasize the openness of surface and lightness of construction--discernible traits of the "neutral cage" design.

The cage form was inherent in the nature of commercial buildings...the reduction in weight achieved by metal framing, allowed increased height, the reduction of wall surface permitted more glass area and thus better lighting, and the reduction in structural elements made for greater flexibility in the use of interior space, while the lower cost and speedier construction were decided economic advantages.<sup>11</sup>

McIlvain's design also reveals an understanding of the capability of materials, a sense of harmony and proportion, but best of all, he combined his knowledge of the architectural past with his own aesthetic sensitivities and arrived at a personal synthesis.

Conclusion:

After operating a successful business that employed over 500 people throughout eight stores<sup>12</sup>, Arthur Guettel retired in 1964, closing the Kansas City location. The building at Twelfth and Grand Avenue remained vacant until 1972 when the building was remodeled "to comply with recent changes in architecture", covering McIlvain's original design.

The renovation of The Palace Clothing Company Building would make the structure a focal point of an important section of Grand Avenue, (this is a major thoroughfare to the civic center), and would re-establish its historic and aesthetic importance. Recent downtown Kansas City revitalization plans include the renovation of the Boley Building (Louis S. Curtiss, 1908-09) and the Bonfils Building (Frederick C. Gunn, 1925), two historically significant structures directly to the west and south of The Palace Clothing Building, respectively. It is significant to note that Frederic E. McIlvain assisted the firm of Gunn and Curtiss for over a decade; thus the renovation of The Palace would complete an historic triad of structures, recalling the strengths and imagination of an era of architectural design.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name KANSAS CITY, MO-KANS.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 115 36321910 432188100  
Zone Easting Northing

B              
Zone Easting Northing

C            

D            

E            

F            

G            

H            

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Plat 0166, parcel 079, Swope's Addition, lot 85. The Palace Clothing Company building fronts 87 feet along the west side of Grand Avenue, and 115 feet along the north side of Twelfth 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

name/title J. Cydney Millstein Architectural and Art Historical Research

organization    date 17 October 1984

street & number Post Office Box 2146 telephone 816/474-7806

city or town Kansas City state Missouri 64142

# 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 *John Karel*

title John Karel, Director & Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Parks and Historic Preservation date 11-29-84

For NPS use only:

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Western Contractor, 20 February 1924, p. 42.
- <sup>2</sup> Kansas City Star, 16 April 1972, p. 16E.
- <sup>3</sup> McIlvain's original design allowed for the addition of two to three floors, which explains the relatively small cornice.
- <sup>4</sup> Kansas City Star, 7 December 1924, p. 5A.
- <sup>5</sup> Walter P. Tracy, Kansas City and Its One Hundred Foremost Men, ([Kansas City]: By the Author, [1925]), pp. 106-07.
- <sup>6</sup> Kansas City Star, 7 December 1924, p. 5A.
- <sup>7</sup> Dick Fowler, Leaders in Our Town, (Kansas City: Burd and Fletcher, nd), p. 177.
- <sup>8</sup> Tracy, pp. 106-07.
- <sup>9</sup> Kansas City Star, 7 December 1924, p. 5A.
- <sup>10</sup> Kansas City Star, 19 August 1921, np.; Kansas City Star, 19 November 1945, np.
- <sup>11</sup> Milton W. Brown, Sam Hunter, et al. American Art, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), p. 258.
- <sup>12</sup> Fowler, pp. 177-178.
- <sup>13</sup> Kansas City Star, 16 April 1972, p. 16 E.
- <sup>14</sup> McIlvain's career in Kansas City as listed in the Kansas City Directory, from 1893 to 1907.

Major Bibliographical References:

- Brown, Milton, and Hunter, Sam, et al. American Art. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979.
- Creel, George and Slavens, John. Men Who Are Making Kansas City. Kansas City: Hudson Kimberly, 1902.
- Fowler, Dick. Leaders In Our Town. Kansas City: Burd and Fletcher, nd.
- Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Kansas City. Kansas City: AIA, 1979.
- Tracy, Walter P. Kansas City and Its One Hundred Foremost Men. ([Kansas City]: By the Author, [1925]).

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2. James M. Denny, Chief of Survey and  
Registration Section and State  
Contact Person

Historic Preservation Program  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
1915 Southridge Drive  
Jefferson City

November 15, 1984  
(314) 751-4096  
Missouri 65201

363 35'

ST. JOSEPH 50 MI.  
4 MI. TO INTERSTATE 29

ST. JOSEPH VIA INTER. 29 50 MI.  
3.1 MI. TO JUNC. INTERSTATE 29 & 35  
7062 II NE  
(NORTH KANSAS CITY)

366

32'30"

367

49



**THE PALACE CLOTHING COMPANY BUILDING**  
 1126-1128 Grand Avenue  
 Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Scale 1:24,000

Kansas City, MO-KANS Quadrangle  
 (Photocopied 1970&1975)

UTM Reference Point:  
 15/363290/432860

**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **Palace Clothing Company Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **K. Gastinger**

Date

Photographed: **1984**

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

- 1 of 6. Facing SW.
- 2 of 6. Facing NW.
- 3 of 6. Facing N.
- 4 of 6. Facing NW.
- 5 of 6. Facing W.
- 6 of 6. Camera facing NW.

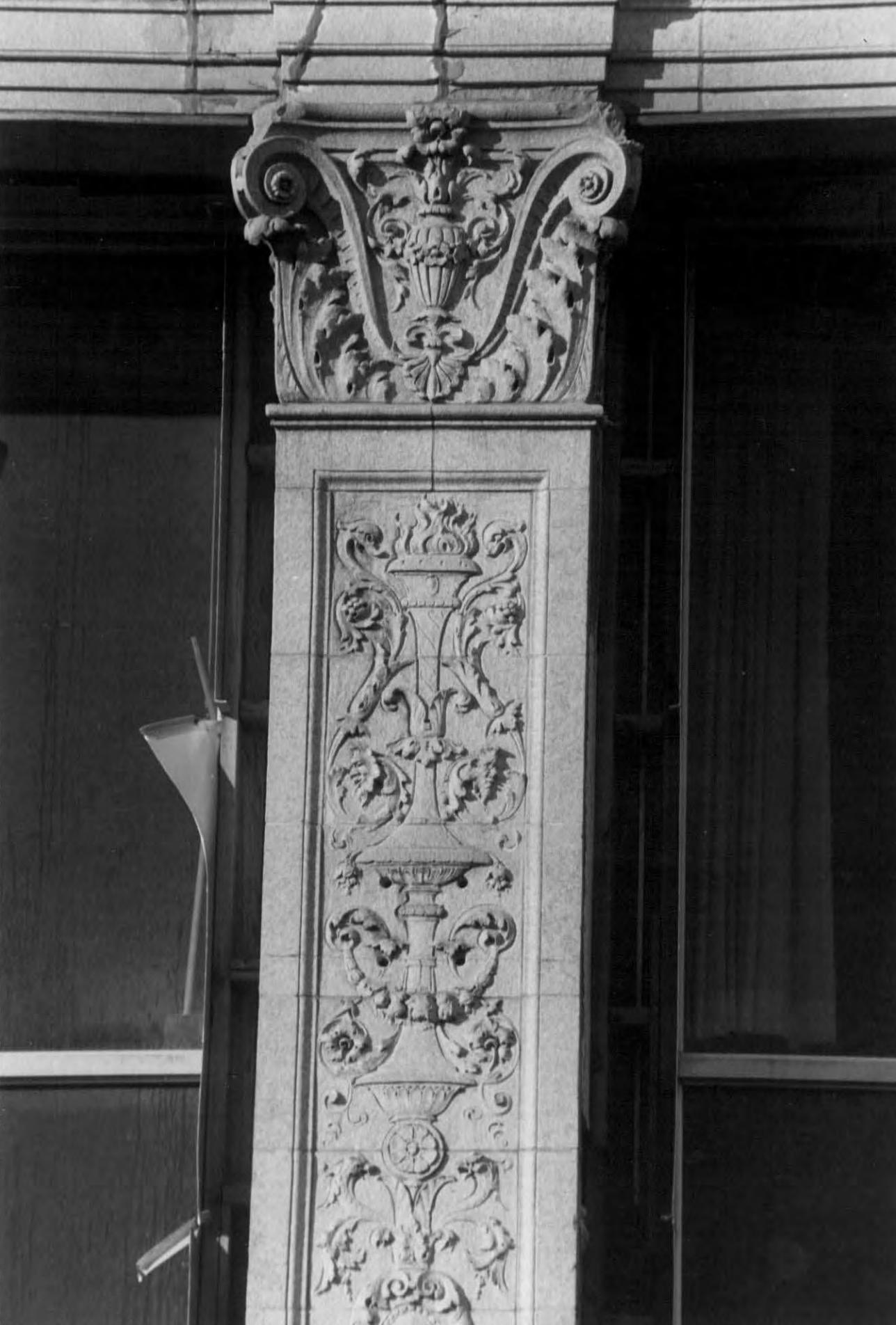


The Palace Clothing Co.

The Palace Clothing Co.

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