

## Dallas Landmark Commission Landmark Nomination Form

### 1. Name

historic: Texas Mail Order Plant

and/or common: Sears Catalog Distribution Center

date: 1913-1925

### 2. Location

address: 1325, 1401, 1409, 1601 S. Lamar

location/neighborhood: South Dallas

blocks:

survey:

tract size:

### 3. Current Zoning

### 4. Classification

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

Current Owner: South Side Plaza Management

Contact: Peter Coughlin

Phone:(214) 428-4848

Address: 1409 S. Lamar Dallas, TX > 75215-1818

### 6. Form Preparation

Date: Oct. 15, 1997

Name & Title: Kate Singleton

Organization:

Contact:

Phone:(214) 821-7533

### 7. Representation on Existing Surveys

Alexander Survey (citywide)  local  state  national  National Register  
 H.P.L. Survey (CBD)  A  B  C  D  Recorded TX Historic Ldmk  
 Oak Cliff   TX Archaeological Ldmk  
 Victorian Survey   
 Dallas Historic Resources Survey, Phase   high  medium  low

*For Office Use Only*

Date Rec'd: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey Verified: Y N by: \_\_\_\_\_ Field Check by: \_\_\_\_\_ Petitions Needed: Y N

Nomination: Archaeological Site Structure(s) Structure & Site District

**8. Historic Ownership**

original owner: Sears, Roebuck and Company

significant later owner(s):

**9. Construction Dates**

original: Sears-1913-1915; 1325-1910; 1601-1913

alterations/additions: Sears-1925, 1927, 1960's

**10. Architect**

original construction: Sears-Lang and Witchell; 1325-C.W. Bulger

alterations/additions:

**11. Site Features**

natural:

urban design:

**12. Physical Description**

Condition, check one:

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

unaltered

altered

Check one:

original site

moved (date \_\_\_\_\_)

*Describe present and original (if known) physical appearance. Include style(s) of architecture, current condition and relationship to surrounding fabric (structures, objects, etc.) elaborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments and site details.*

The Sears Complex consists of four structures: 1409 S. Lamar St. (the main building), 1401-05 S. Lamar (Sears dining hall), 1325 S. Lamar St. (the Dallas Coffin Co.), and 1601 S. Lamar (National Casket Co.). The buildings that exist today are not the original Sears building that opened in 1910. That original building was razed in 1925. The most significant buildings are 1401-1405 and 1409 S. Lamar, designed by Lang and Witchell and built between 1912-1915. The other buildings will be discussed following this. Although these buildings were constructed independently of the Sears Building, they are similar in design and construction creating an architecturally compatible district.

Main Sears Building - 1409 S. Lamar

The Sears complex is located on S. Lamar Street between McKee and the first building North of Bellevue Street. 1409 S. Lamar is a large red brick building with horizontal white banding built in a transitional style from Prairie to Sullivanesque. The structure was built in five stages: the first in 1912, followed by additions in 1913-15, 1925, 1927, and 1966. Lang and Witchell, a noted Dallas architectural firm designed the 1912-15 building.

The complex features a strong horizontal, mostly nine-story massive block with raised towers. The cornice, windows, and towers are finely decorated with concrete banding. While the building features horizontal lines, it also demonstrates Louis Sullivan's and the Chicago School column structure building theory. The verticality of the building became less evident when the 1913-1915 additions were constructed therefore elongating the building. The first story, taller than the other stories, functions as a heavy base; the stylistically interesting parapet serves as a capital; and the intermediate levels serve as the shaft with strong vertical and horizontal elements. The towers and the horizontal white banding are the most elaborate detailing on the

<b>Continuation Sheet</b>
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Item #13
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(Page 6 of 8 )
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In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the Dallas expansion ended as Sears began falling apart. The 1980's began an era of decline for Sears, profits decreased and expenses had doubled.

The Dallas Branch lost its major appliance distribution when Sears opened a new appliance distribution center in Garland, Texas. In 1980, the Southwest Territory Building closed as operations were moved to Atlanta, Georgia. The buyer record keeping operation was also moved to Atlanta. On August 1, 1984, the Lamar Retail Store closed after 59 years of operation. In August 1987, the Dallas catalog buying organization was closed and all operations were transferred to Sears' headquarters in Chicago. This business crisis led to company changes that continued into the early 1990's and culminated with the announcement on January 25, 1993 that Sears would discontinue the catalog business to concentrate on the retail and insurance businesses. (Rinehart, p.28-35).

By the time the catalog business was discontinued, the Dallas Catalog Plant was the oldest and only remaining catalog merchandise facility personally established by order of Richard Sears. The Sears complex and two adjacent buildings at 1601 and 1325 S. Lamar were constructed along the Cotton Belt Railroad in an industrial area which stretched north into Downtown Dallas and the North End. Outside the West End Historic District, this group of buildings is one of the older industrial complexes in Dallas. This business and its associated buildings had been integral to the growth of Dallas as a distribution center for the Southwest.

#### National Casket Company

This address, 1601 S. Lamar Street, first appeared in the Dallas City Directory in 1913 as the Dallas Dry Goods Co. with J. R. Cavanaugh as President, R. W. Burrage as Secretary, and H. H. White as Treasurer. The dry goods business stayed there until 1917 when the property is listed as vacant. In 1918, the Sears Roebuck Co. is listed at 1601-09 S. Lamar. Sears remained at that location until 1921 when the National Casket Co. moved in. The company manufactured metal, hardwood, and textile covered caskets and funeral supplies. In 1968, Sears acquired the property and used it for storage. In 1973, it was remodeled and became the Territorial Annex Building which housed the National Accounts Payable Center until 1991. (Rinehart, p.21-28).

#### Dallas Coffin Company

The Dallas Coffin Company Building located at 1325 S. Lamar was constructed in 1910. The first listing for the Dallas Coffin Company was in the 1907 City Directory at 105-07 N. Broadway. Julius Frank Parks was President of the company at that time and remained as head until his death on July 18, 1949. The company continued at the Broadway Street location until 1910. This location was probably flooded in 1908 flood, which may have led

<b>Continuation Sheet</b>
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Item # 13
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(Page 7 of 8 )
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to the decision to construct a new building away from the river. On December 15, 1910, a building permit was applied for to construct a four-story reinforced concrete building costing \$57,000 and situated at the northeast corner Austin and Belleview Streets. This building ended up being five stories. The address for the building was listed as 1321-27 S. Lamar in the 1911 City Directory and remained that number until 1928, when it was changed to 1325 S. Lamar.

This building was designed by prominent local architectural firm of C.W. Bulger and Son. The firm specialized in Baptist churches and built over 100 in the South and Southwest. Their Dallas churches include McKinney Avenue Baptist Church, Gaston Avenue Baptist Church and the remodeling of First Baptist Church. The firm also designed numerous residences, apartments and the extant Crockett and Colonial schools. The son, Clarence, is best known for the Praetorian Building, Dallas' first steel-framed skyscraper. The Dallas Coffin Company Building was designed in 1910, six years after the father and son set up their practice and three years after the Praetorian Building.

The Dallas Coffin Company was an undertakers' supply which handled "the most complete range of coffins" as exclaimed in **Greater Dallas Illustrated**. They supplied many styles to suit all tastes. They also came in a price range that made them available to all socio-economic groups. They offered a complete line with "extra facilities" to undertakers throughout the Southwest. Their offices never closed and they were available to ship all day and night. In 1908, they were capitalized at \$50,000.

Beginning in 1907, A.B. Thornton was listed as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Dallas Coffin Co. He remained the Secretary until the last listing for the company in 1950. The coffin company remained in the building until 1950 with little change. In the mid-thirties, Largent Parks was listed as Vice-President. In 1947, Largent was listed as manager and the next year was listed as President. In 1950, James H. Rankin was listed as President. This is the last year the Dallas Coffin Company was listed in the Dallas City Directory.

In 1951, 1325 S. Lamar was listed as vacant. The next year, however, the Reserve Life Insurance Co. habited the building. Charles Sammons was President; Wallace Savage, C. C. Yost, Clinton Bradley, Mrs. Gladys Brown, Samuel Gilbert, E. H. Barry, William Sullivan, and Humphries Wofford were the Vice Presidents. E. H. Hubbard was the Secretary Treasurer. The Reserve Life Insurance Co. remained in the building until 1958 when it was listed as vacant in the City Directories. Wallace Savage was a Dallas mayor and Charles Sammons was a prominent businessman.

<b>Continuation Sheet</b>
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Item #13
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(Page 8 of 8 )
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In 1959, Allied Business Services, Inc., a printer, was listed at 1325 S. Lamar. J. R. Acker was the general manager. In 1960, 1325 S. Lamar was listed as a Sears Roebuck warehouse. The building was renamed the Annex Building and housed the Supply Department (Rinehart, p.21-28).