

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS 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 Lincoln Trust Building

and/or common Title Guaranty Building

2. Location

street & number 706 Chestnut Street

___ not for publication

city, town St. Louis

___ vicinity of

congressional district #3-Richard Gephardt

state Missouri

code 29

county St. Louis City

code 510

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Title Guaranty Building Corporation

street & number 706 Chestnut Street, Room 1025

city, town St. Louis

___ vicinity of

state MO 63101

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Tucker Boulevard and Market Street

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date October, 1975; revised, April 1977 ___ federal ___ state ___ county local

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Missouri State Historical Survey
1981
Historic Preservation Program
Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City,

State

MO 65102

Item #10 continued

turning south, continue 109 feet to the north side of the east/west alley of CB 184;
thence turning east continue 133 feet along said side of the alley to the west side of
Seventh Street; thence turning north continue 109 feet along said side of Seventh Street
to the point of origin.

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 exterior of the twelve and one-half story Lincoln Trust/Title Guaranty Building designed by the pre-eminent St. Louis firm of Eames & Young is remarkably unchanged since its construction over eighty years ago. (Photos #1 and #2) William S. Eames, FAIA (1857-1915) and Thomas C. Young, FAIA (1858-1934) both studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis before travel and further study in Europe. Eames was Deputy Commissioner for Buildings in St. Louis from 1883-85 during which time he designed the landmark Red Water Tower north of Hyde Park. Young worked for the Boston office of Ware & Van Brunt and E. M. Wheelwright before he and Eames formed their St. Louis partnership in 1886. The firm quickly developed a lucrative practice including houses for the elite in St. Louis' new private places.¹ Robert S. Brookings, owner of the land at Seventh and Chestnut and a partner in the Samuel Cupples Woodenware Company, was a consistent client of the firm commissioning two houses (1888 and 1897) and the massive warehouse complex known as Cupples Station (1894-1915).²

The Lincoln Trust was apparently the firm's first skyscraper. Although taller buildings had already been built in downtown St. Louis, a city ordinance passed in 1897 limited the Lincoln Trust to 150 feet above the sidewalk.³ Plans for the building are dated March 1, 1898, and the building permit was issued later that same month. (The projected cost was listed as \$350,000--a commonplace and deliberate underestimate practiced at that time. Actual costs were close to one-half million.) Photographs by contractor George A. Fuller of New York taken during the whirlwind construction of the building show the laying of rose-brown brick and terra cotta underway a scant few floors below the erection of the steel frame skeleton. (Photo #3) Plans for the design of interior office fixtures for the Lincoln Trust space by architect W. H. Foster were approved by various contractors in October, 1898. A small building to the immediate west on Chestnut Street which Eames & Young had designed in 1895 for the Lincoln Trust (Photo #4) was refaced to match the skyscraper from plans dated December 26, 1898, by Eames & Young.⁴

The building is H-shaped in plan with the main entrance on Chestnut announced by two, highly polished rose granite columns that rise from unpolished granite bases to support a projecting portion of the Doric frieze. Panels of ornamental terra cotta by Winkle Terra Cotta Company of St. Louis complete with putti and quasi-modest damsels set amidst vegetal patterns laced with cornucopias, urns overflowing with fruit, scales, horns, lamps and eagles adorn the entrance (Photo #5) and continue around the base of the Chestnut and Seventh Street elevations.⁵ Above the molded string course which sets off the base from the shaft, alternating wide and narrow pilasters soar to a projecting molding above the twelfth story. At the attic the richly decorated terra cotta frieze is pierced by small rectangular openings flanked by solemn angels. (Photo #6) Original cresting above the projecting cornice punctuated by lion's heads has been removed. Invisible from the street is a domed elevator penthouse still crowned by a cupola but missing its original winged figures. (Photo #7)

Inside the lobby only the well-polished brass mailbox fed by brass letter drops from each floor gives testimony to the once lavish interior finishes. Resembling a

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turn-of-the-century nursery rhyme illustration, the lower portion of the letter box depicts the carefully rendered face of an old man whose mustache sweeps upward, merging at either side with the tails of exotic birds. A stalk, growing from the petal-like crown worn by the old man, encircles the chubby face of the sun. Ornate light fixtures, white marble facing, columns, pilasters and floors which once were the setting for this picturesque ornament have either disappeared behind formica sheathing or been removed from the building during an ill-advised "remodel" of 1962. Fortunately, the original stained glass ceiling is merely hidden by that same remodeling. Most corridors and staircases above the first floor still retain the original white marble floors and wainscoting. Much of the original hardwood flooring in office spaces has been covered with vinyl tiles and some of the quarter-sawn oak trim has been painted. The twelfth story offices of the east and west wings are distinguished by barrel vaults of yellow, amber and clear glass.⁷

Footnotes

¹Membership in the right clubs and organizations helped the firm meet prospective clients. Eames belonged to the St. Louis Club and the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C.; Young was a member of the Mercantile Club, the exclusive Algonquin Golf Club and a Mason. Their well-publicized work in St. Louis brought them a national reputation and commissions for the San Francisco Customs House, the New Washington Hotel in Seattle, the Walker Bank Building in Salt Lake City and U.S. Penitentiaries in Atlanta and Leavenworth, Texas. Eames was President of the American Institute of Architects from 1904 to 1905.

²Brookings was a major force behind the development of the new Washington University campus constructed in conjunction with preparations for the World's Fair. The centerpiece of that complex, built in 1900, is named for him as is the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. Eames & Young were among six nationally prominent firms asked to submit entries for a competition for the new campus but Cope & Stewardson of Philadelphia were awarded the commission.

³Brickbuilder 6 (5 May 1897): 107, and Banker's Magazine 60 (1900): 917.

⁴A partial set of original plans is in the possession of the present owners.

⁵Grillwork has been removed from the two arched entrances and these openings as well as mezzanine-level openings at the street have been filled in with panels.

⁶Contractor George A. Fuller, with offices in New York, Chicago, Washington and Philadelphia, published large format, limp-leather, gilt-edged books in 1904 and 1910 with photographs and floor plans of his important contracts. Eames & Young's Lincoln Trust Building was included. The list of other firms resembles an architectural Who's Who: McKim, Mead & White, Burnham & Root, Adler & Sullivan, Peabody & Stearns, Furness & Evans, Cass Gilbert, Bruce Price and Holabird & Roche.

3. 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1898 Builder/Architect Eames & Young, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lincoln Trust/Title Guaranty Building of 1898 is significant as an outstanding late nineteenth century skyscraper designed by the St. Louis firm of Eames & Young. Although it is an effective variation on Adler & Sullivan's prototypical expression of verticality (the Wainwright) built six years earlier directly across the street, the rich terra cotta ornament in Renaissance style and the H-shaped plan of the Lincoln Trust Building represent Eames & Young's own distinctive taste and skill in design. The history of the building and its early tenants reflects the spectacular economic development of post-Civil War St. Louis along with the corruption and resulting reform efforts celebrated by Lincoln Steffens which accompanied this dynamic and unregulated growth.

Scandal besmirched the purchase of the site of the Lincoln Trust Building in 1890. The 133 by 109 foot property at the southwest corner of Chestnut and Seventh Streets included the handsome and substantially built, five story Polytechnic Institute building containing the public school library. (Photo #8) Designed in 1858 by Thomas Walsh and completed after the Civil War in 1867 at a cost of \$350,000 on a lot donated to Washington University by Col. John O'Fallon, the Institute was planned by the University to provide much needed technical education for the youth of St. Louis. Sold to the St. Louis Public Schools in 1868 for \$280,000, the building housed a 30,000 volume library described as a "marvel of ornamentation" and meeting places for the Academy of Science, the Medical Society, Institute of Architects, Missouri Historical Society, Society of Engineers and the Art Society.¹

After plans were made by the School Board to construct a new library, the property was sold on August 13, 1890, to Robert S. Brookings for only \$120,000--a sale featured as an especially flagrant example of the corruption of the School Board in a pre-election series of exposés by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch the following year.² The Post pointed out that Ellis Wainwright paid the same amount for the unimproved lot across the street and implied that School Board President Miller's insurance company stood to profit by the Board's stipulation that Brookings insure the Polytechnic building and its contents during the time needed for completion of the new library building.

In 1893, after the Polytechnic Institute was vacated, Brookings adapted the building for use as office space. From 1895 until it was demolished to make way for the Lincoln Trust skyscraper, the Institute was headquarters for Jay Gould's Wabash Railroad--the epitome of late nineteenth century empires amassed and controlled by those willing to wager the high risks for immense profit (or heavy loss) involved with transcontinental railroad speculations. St. Louis' position as the fourth largest city was due in no small measure to the rapid infusion of capital during the two decades following the completion of Eads Bridge which brought rails across

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the Mississippi for the first time. The diversification of that capital helped the city weather both the Panic of 1893 and the Depression of 1896 without so much as a run on a bank. The President of the Real Estate Exchange, organized in 1893, asserted that money in large or small sums could be more easily borrowed on property in St. Louis than any other city in the country.³

Along with comparative stability and continued growth, St. Louis was also earning a less enviable reputation as a place where corruption went hand in glove, or pocket, with doing business. Gradually, clamor for political reform merged with a growing interest in a City Beautiful enough to attract a World's Fair. Site work for the Title Guaranty Building the same year that the third national political convention was held in St. Louis (Republican--with William McKinley elected on the first ballot) and the Civic Improvement League was organized:

St. Louis...is preparing for a World's Fair...to commemorate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. The discussion of such a project naturally called the attention of all good citizens to the prime necessity of making the city itself a striking feature of the show proposed for the nations of the earth, and this necessity was the more strongly borne in upon the people by the fact that for years, the municipality had been governed by about as incompetent and corrupt a set of cheap politicians as ever were produced in any place in the world.⁴

The catalyst of the Civic Improvement League's skillful involvement with the press brought far-reaching political reforms and physical improvements. "The value of beauty as an asset is recognized by great commercial institutions, and at least four of the St. Louis trust companies and banks have put up buildings that attract visitors, and presumably, deposits, by their outer and inner graces of architecture. One of those companies was the Lincoln Trust whose new building appeared in a full page photograph in Barney's guide to the city published in 1902 for the edification of both residents and visitors to the Fair. Still the only skyscraper in the block, windows in the Lincoln Trust's top three floors announced the presence of "Wabash Railroad General Offices" in bold letters. (Photo #1) But other tenants in the building, both friend and foe of the Wabash and its ilk, would play more important roles in scandal and reform.

The Official Office Building Directory and Architectural Handbook of St. Louis for 1900 listed all the tenants of the Lincoln Trust. The American Car and Foundry Company on the sixth floor was presided over by William K. Bixby who both before and after his arrival in St. Louis from Texas had worked for a number of Gould-controlled railroads including the Wabash. Like Brookings, Bixby became a millionaire before he was fifty, a major St. Louis philanthropist and a member of the city's elite.⁶ Two floors down was the office of the editor of the National Anti-Trust League. The C. R. H. Davis Real Estate Development Company, publisher in 1909 of that marvel of boosterism--St. Louis, the Coming Giant of America, was on the fifth floor. Architects Eames & Young offices were on seven as were the Offices of the Southern History Company, 1899 publisher of Hyde and Conard's compendious Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis which painted St. Louis and St. Louisans in rosy hues.

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Joseph W. Folk, a young lawyer from Tennessee with offices on the fifth floor, took a dimmer view of the workings of the city which was virtually controlled by "Boss" Ed Butler and the "combination"--a majority of the Municipal Assembly who accepted "boodle", or bribes, in exchange for votes. The "combination" sold franchises for streetcar lines and railroad spurs and contracts for city services. Folk, a Democrat, was elected Circuit Attorney in 1901 and immediately went after not only the "boodlers" but the respectable businessmen who paid the bribes. His doggedness and courage were celebrated by Lincoln Steffens in the widely read McClure's Magazine in two articles later published in The Shame of the Cities.⁷ One of Folk's most spectacular cases involved a roll of \$75,000 bribe money held in a safe deposit box in the basement vault of the Lincoln Trust Company pending the "delivery" of a streetcar line franchise.

Folk was swept into the Governor's office in 1904 on a wave of reform sentiment. Enacted during his term were laws increasing the statute of limitations on bribery from three to five years, a maximum freight bill and ten other laws regulating the railroads. Another 1900 tenant who became Governor was Henry S. Caulfield, attorney for the Lincoln Trust. A Republican reformer who was elected Governor in 1928 on the eve of the Depression, he is best remembered as drafter of the new city charter of 1914 which abolished the bicameral Municipal Assembly long considered contributory to corrupt practices by elected representatives. (In 1925-26, Caulfield was a member of a board created to draft plans for an unsuccessful City-County merger.)

After the merger of the Lincoln Trust and Missouri Bank in 1904, the lease for the building was transferred in 1909 to the Title Guaranty Trust.⁸ (Though ownership and leases have since changed hands many times, the building is still known as the Title Guaranty.) Real estate companies were major tenants through the 1940's and Chestnut Street between Seventh and Ninth Streets was alive with the activities of "Real Estate Row". The former operator of the lobby cigar store recalls that clusters of real estate men would conduct business on the sidewalk or in the lobby in bad weather, shake hands on deals and walk across the street to the Real Estate Exchange in the Wainwright Building.⁹ Law offices continued to find the Title Guaranty an attractive location and the premiere space on the east wing of the twelfth floor once occupied by the Wabash was elegantly refurbished in 1927 for the firm of Foristel, Mudd, Blair and Habenicht. The office of the Federal Prohibition Administrator on the west wing of the twelfth floor assured the demise of the popular first floor cafe and bar during Prohibition while the occupancy in the 1930's and 40's by labor unions was an indicator that the Title Guaranty Building was no longer the best office address. A larger question soon became--was downtown St. Louis a good address?

Building in downtown was virtually non-existent between 1930 and the mid-sixties as the all too typical lure of the suburbs plus post-World War II Federal programs combined to change the economic/social statistics of a rapidly dwindling population. By the 1970 census St. Louis' rank order had dropped to 18th and regional headquarters of financial institutions and national headquarters of large corporations were increasingly choosing St. Louis County over the city. Many of the skyscrapers

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built at the turn of the century had become surface parking lots; the rest were threatened by "obsolescence" and a new boosterism which understandably equated new glass towers with a healthy, competitive downtown. Only through the intervention of a persistent few did the Old Post Office and the Wainwright escape the headache ball.

But the ghost of the Civic Improvement League had ironically come back to haunt the Lincoln Trust/Title Guaranty. Renamed the Civic League in 1907, the organization published one of the first comprehensive city plans in the country. Included with proposals dealing with the creation of small parks in congested residential districts and boulevards to connect the existing major parks were suggestions for the almost abandoned river front and a "Champs Elysees" transformation of Chestnut Street to improve the approach to Union Station. A colored rendering accompanying the plan envisioned a linear mall extending westward to Grand Avenue. That concept has survived in various guises down to the present where the only remaining portion of the "Gateway Mall" to be completed is the section between Sixth and Tenth Streets.

The owners of the Title Guaranty Building have awaited nomination since the ill-fated Multiple Resource nomination for the Central Business District was approved by the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in 1978. Subsequent Urban Development Action Grant applications for yet another clearance version of the Gateway Mall have been rejected. In May of 1981, the western wing of the twelfth floor once occupied by the Wabash was renovated by Claybour Associates--architects of a 1976 plan to "complete" the Mall and retain the historic buildings--and Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.¹⁰ The re-opening of the Wainwright State Office complex has already brought some of the life back to "Real Estate Row". There could be no finer compliment to Louis Sullivan and Mitchell & Guirgola's Wainwright Building than a complete renovation of Eames & Young's first and best skyscraper, the Lincoln Trust.

Footnotes

¹Camille N. Dry and Richard J. Compton, Pictorial St. Louis (St. Louis: n.p., 1875; reprint ed., St. Louis: Harry M. Hagen, 1971), p. 159.

²"Closing the Case," the fifth in the series, appeared in the Post on November 1, 1891, accompanied by a cartoon of rackerteering School Board members carrying or wearing symbols of their particular variety of corruption. One, holding a contract in hand, carries a model of the Institute under his arm.

³"The Central Continental Metropolis; St. Louis, the Fourth American City After Great New York's Consolidation," American Magazine, May, 1897, as cited by Selweyn K. Troen and Glen E. Holt, eds., St. Louis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1977), p. 64.

⁴Louis Marion McCall, "Making St. Louis a Better Place to Live In," The Chautauquan, January, 1903, as cited in Troen and Holt, p. 130.

⁵Ibid., pp. 131 and 132.

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⁶Both Bixby and his boss, William McMillan-Chairman of the Board of Missouri Car & Foundry Company, built palaces on Portland Place in the 1890's. Eames & Young designed #25 Portland Place for McMillan (1894); Bixby chose W. Albert Swasey for #12 Portland (1893).

⁷Published as The Shame of the Cities in 1904, the eight articles are masterpieces of muckracking journalism inspired by a full measure of moral indignation. Some of Steffen's indignation was shared by the good citizens of St. Louis who after publication of "Tweed Days in St. Louis" in 1902 sported buttons urging "Folk and Reform".

⁸Incorporated in 1900, the Title Guaranty's Board of Directors included influential St. Louis Thomas McKittrick-dry goods merchant, E. C. Simmons-national leader in wholesale hardware, Breckenridge Jones-prominent corporation lawyer and H. C. Pierce-early investor in Texas oil fields. Pierce's company was the western branch of Rockefeller's Standard Oil from 1878 to 1913 when litigation forced the separation of the two companies.

⁹Interview with Roy Stahl by Jane Porter, St. Louis, Missouri, 23 June 1981.

¹⁰Renovation of the space was partially underwritten by three national paint associations as a demonstration project to kick off a promotion campaign, "Picture it Painted".

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage 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	4	0	0	4	2	7	3	8	3	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

The Title Guaranty Building is located in St. Louis city block 134; beginning on the southwest corner of Seventh Street and Chestnut continue 133 feet along the south side of Chestnut; thence

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By © 1981, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

name: title Jane M. Porter, Researcher and Carolyn Hewes Toft, Executive Director

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 13 July 1981

street & number 706 Chestnut Street, #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

title date

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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PHOTO

UNAVAILABLE