

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bryant Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number	<u>1102 Grand Avenue</u>	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> not for publication
city, town	<u>Kansas City</u>	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> vicinity
state	<u>Missouri</u>	code	<u>MO</u>
county	<u>Jackson</u>	code	<u>095</u>
zip code	<u>64106</u>		

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Claire F. Blackwell
Signature of certifying official Claire F. Blackwell
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

8 March 1989
Date

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Granite

Brick

roof Asphalt

other Terra Cotta

Art Deco

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Bryant Building is a 26-story steel frame office building executed in the Art Deco Style. Located in the core of Kansas City's Central Business District, the Bryant Building occupies a prominent corner site at the intersection of 11th and Grand Avenue. Comparable scale buildings are located to the east, south and west; to the north is new construction. The Bryant Building retains a high degree of its original integrity of design, materials and workmanship with the sole exterior alterations confined to the installation of aluminum frame, full-story windows on the ground level. This alteration does not diminish the building's Art Deco form, verticality or massing. The most significant ground story features, that of the brass entrances, are still extant.

The ground floor's rectangular plan is divided by a "T" shaped hall that leads to the entrances on the north and east. Highly stylized, Art Deco-influenced, geometric brass grilles mark the walls of the entrance vestibules. The window and door enframements of the vestibules have grape leaf and geometric relief upon the brass. Marble is lavished on the public space, and used for the baseboards, floors, fluted corner pilasters and molded cornice. Ornate plaster frieze bands with a sunflower motif are painted in gold leaf. This decorative element emphasizes the perimeters of the barrel vaulted ceilings. On the east and north facade, the entrances bear the street address in the brass door enframements. The subsequent floor's rectangular plan is characterized by the bank of eight elevators along the south wall that issue onto an east-west hallway. The interior finishes of the hallways vary from marble wainscotting, simple marble baseboards, to wood panel wainscotting.

The Bryant Building's concise statement of the Art Deco mode is revealed on the two primary facades, Grand Avenue (east) and 11th Street (north). The west and south facades are unadorned and faced with a grey tone brick. The main (east) facade is 10 bays wide while the north facade is composed of 12 bays. The facades demonstrate a formal organization evidenced by the regularly spaced spandrels and the setbacks of the upper stories. The varied surface materials also establish the facades' symmetry. The building's base is formed by three stories clad in coursed granite ashlar which terminates with tooled horizontal bands that visually read as belt courses. At the entrances the horizontal line is broken with a three-story opening framed with vertical, Art Deco inspired stylized reeds and floral panels incised in the granite. On the east and north, the entrances occupy the recessed space and the brass enframements echo

☒ See continuation sheet

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BRYANT BUILDING

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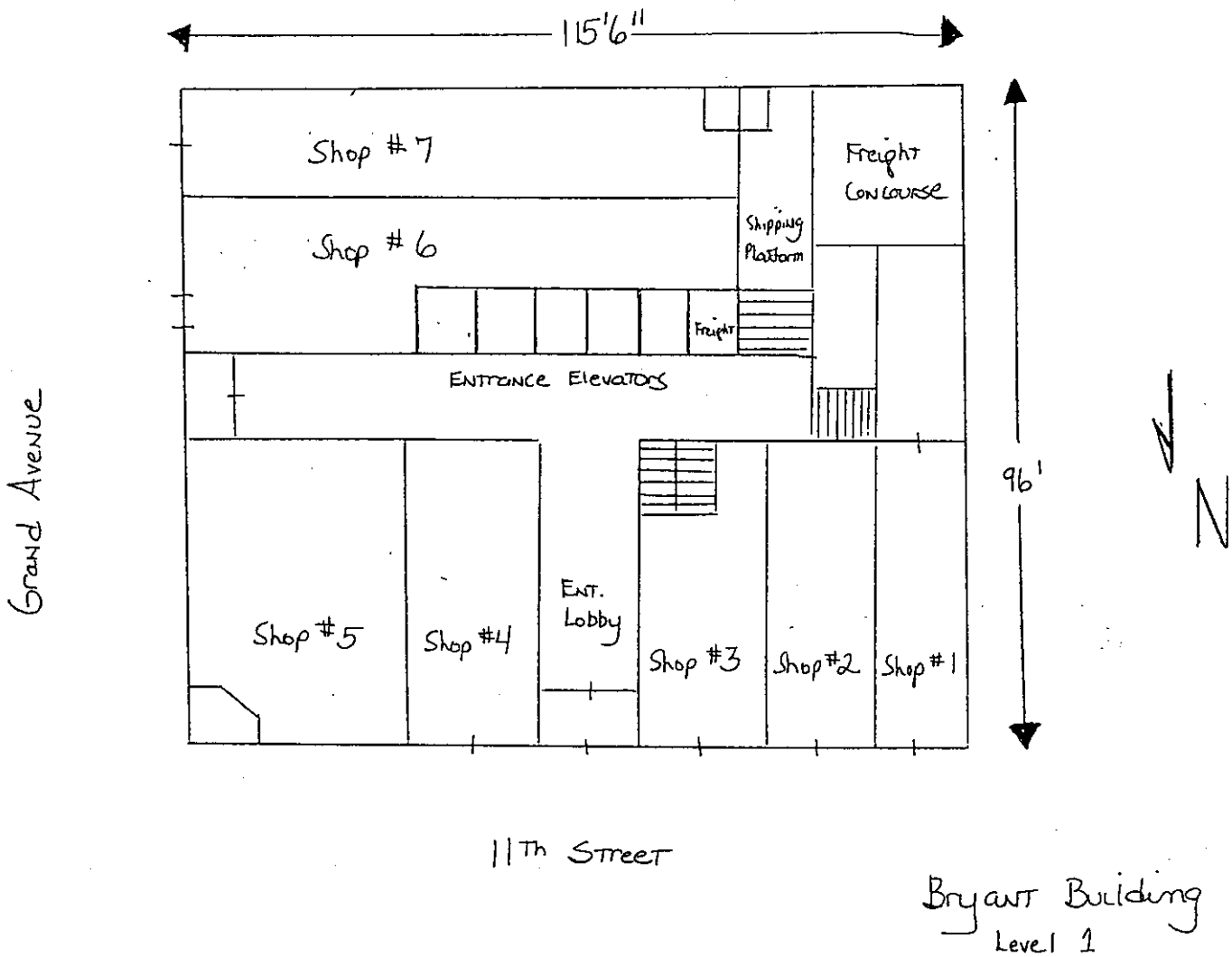
the floral, reed and geometric motifs. The 4th through 26th stories reveal the overall form and massing of the building as vertical glazed cream brick piers rise against the recessed brown terra-cotta spandrels. To achieve a greater sense of height and an Art Deco streamlined image, the piers are graduated in width: more robust at the corners and narrowing within the central bays. The tonality of the light and dark surface materials articulates the building's dominant vertical line as well as announcing the setbacks that begin at the 15th story. The three series of setbacks feature brown and cream terra-cotta capstones, forming an appropriate terminus at each level. Regularly spaced, rectangular double hung sash pierce the wall planes in a consistent pattern on each floor. The void created by the fenestration enhances the continuous line of the piers.

The Art Deco motifs such as the stylized reeds, floral and geometric ornamentation gracefully highlight the stern presence of the Bryant Building. The ornamentation is secondary to the building's presence as a skyscraper and acts to create surface texture in response to the overall form. The building's sleek sedate lines announce Art Deco sources and present the verticality, abstract ornamentation, and 'modern' expression inherent in the style.

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8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1930-1931

Significant Dates

1931

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Graham, Anderson, Probst & White

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bryant Building is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion "C" as a distinctive example of the Art Deco mode of architecture in Kansas City and as a significant work of the firm, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, the successors to D. H. Burnham & Company, Chicago. The Bryant Building is further significant as an adaptation of Eliel Saarinen's 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition design, which was awarded the second prize.¹ The building is a clear expression of a modernism that is demonstrated by the restrained use of ornament, the materials employed to emphasize the form's verticality, and the formal, straightforward organization of the primary facades. This modern expression was appropriately recognized after the building's completion by its winning both the Kansas City Business League and local American Institute of Architects Chapter awards in 1931.

The Art Deco style of architecture had roots in the mainstream of the Modern Movement and in the historicism evoked at the turn of the century. The Exposition des Arts Decoratifs, held in Paris in 1925, has been acknowledged as the instigating design force. The sources and the concomitant expressions of Art Deco were varied and were best articulated by Forest F. Lisle's comments at the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition in 1933:

"...the Paris 1925, Frank Lloyd Wright, cubism, machine ethics, Mayan Forms, Pueblo patterns, Dudok, the Viennese Secession, modern interiors, the zoning setback law. This large number of weakly related sources, readily identified as underlying the Moderne in America, begins to suggest the loose, broad, inclusive, less intense, rather indiscriminate, thus democratic, perimeters of the modern movement here as opposed to the impersonal, reductive, exclusive, more idealistic, more moralistic thrust of avant-garde Europe at this time."²

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The Art Deco or Modernistic style was an urban vocabulary that was applied to office buildings, apartment blocks, banks, hotels, department stores and a range of other commercial buildings. The design mode was highly synthetic and relied heavily upon applied ornament and tall, lean forms that left a jagged profile against the sky. In essence, Art Deco architecture attempted to express 'progress' and project a streamlined image. The smooth surfaces, cubic forms and low relief ornament all were combined to create a statement of the new, modern era.

The Bryant Building clearly illustrates the basic elements of Art Deco architecture. The building's crisp, clean lines are defined by glazed cream brick juxtaposed against dark toned terra cotta. Visually, these materials provide a vertical emphasis by allowing the voids to recede and the brick piers to rise, dominating the twenty-six story composition. The materials also demonstrate the Art Deco design preference for smooth, sleek surfaces expressed in 'modern' building materials such as glazed brick, terra cotta and metals. To further enhance the Art Deco directive to establish a streamlined image, the building's primary facades have a formal organization defined by the recessed fenestration. As the building rises, the setbacks gradually emphasize the central axis where the contrast between piers and voids is most pronounced. Each setback is terminated in brown terra cotta, allowing the vertical form to be clearly etched and recognized. The building's scant ornamentation permits the form to achieve the intended prominence.

During the 1920's, Art Deco became a popular architectural idiom for commercial buildings in Kansas City. The City's 1923 zoning ordinance aided in institutionalizing the design mode by requiring setbacks on high-rise buildings, thus dictating the form of intense development. The first Kansas City building that fell under the regulations of the new zoning law was the 1929 addition to the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Executed with Gothic details (now obscured with a false facade), the Telephone Building's fourteen floor addition did not present a dramatic vertical line. The Kansas City Power and Light Company Building's (1931) Art Deco inspiration is cogently stated in the setbacks that extend over half the total height and in the building's limestone ornamentation. As in the Bryant Building, the Kansas City Power and Light Company Building achieves the dominant vertical line through the use of piers set against recessed spandrels. The Kansas City interpretation of Art Deco design was employed for both monumental as well as smaller scale buildings. The fluid low relief ornamentation of floral motifs, chevrons, zigzags and fluting was cast in terra cotta or stone, and applied to buildings of all height ranges. The Professional Building's (1929) bulky 16-story mass at 1103 Grand Avenue reveals its Art Deco details on the upper stories and

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above the entrance in the terra cotta cladding. In contrast, the Bryant Building at 1102 Grand Avenue (1931) is strikingly more 'modern' in appearance due to its stripped down details, the vertical dynamics of the facades and the streamlined quality evoked by glazed brick and dark toned terra cotta. The Bryant Building's overall form and massing clearly announce the Art Deco design sources that were merged with sparse decoration to attain its linear nature.

The construction of the Bryant Building marked the close of Kansas City's boom period for new high-rise office buildings within the Central Business District. Seventy-six new buildings were added to the downtown skyline by 1930, which led the city to boast of being 8th in the nation in the number of buildings 10 stories high. Although privately financed construction projects slowed after 1931, with the deepening economic depression, public expenditures created a major civic center.

Kansas City was fairly well insulated during the Depression due to expenditures through the Public Works Administration. Jackson County's Democratic ties to Washington brought the bulk of Missouri's federal relief and construction funds to Kansas City. Thus, construction activity was very visible in Kansas City during the depression, particularly by the public sector. Through the passage of the "Ten Year Plan," a joint city-county bond program and the federal allocation of Public Works Administration funds, the Municipal Auditorium, the City Hall and the County Courthouse were built. These Art Deco buildings provided not only jobs to Kansas City's economic base, but the stamp of modern design on its major public offices.

The Bryant Building's staid demeanor reflects the precise architectural statements issued by the Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. During the firm's long and prolific practice, it produced fine renditions of popular styles from 1912 to the present. (The firm's only other Kansas City work is the Federal Reserve Bank, 1919, a classically inspired building.) The firm began in 1912 as Graham, Burnham and Company. By 1917, it was reorganized into Graham, Anderson, Probst and White bringing to the office a substantial portion of the former Burnham practice. The principals in the firm were Ernest Graham (1866-1936), Pierce Anderson (1870-1924), Edward Probst (1870-1942) and Howard Judson White (1870-1936).

Graham, Anderson, Probst and White were awarded major commissions shortly after the firm was established. Among their national works were the Equitable Building (New York, 1914), Chicago Union Station (1924), Gimbel Brothers (Philadelphia, 1926-31), Cleveland Union Terminal (1927), Pennsylvania Station

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(Philadelphia, 1932), the Wrigley Building (Chicago, 1921) and the United States Post Office, Chicago branch (1933). The firm executed an extensive variety of building types, including public halls, memorials, libraries, hospitals, banks, warehouses, parking garages and industrial facilities. The firm has long maintained recognition for consistent, quality design throughout the decades it has practiced.

On December 1, 1929, the Kansas City Star published an artist's conception of the proposed twenty-six story skyscraper which would replace the existing seven story Bryant building. The location, the southwest corner of Eleventh Street and Grand Avenue, was a portion of the old Smart farm, the wedding gift of Thomas A. Smart to his daughter, Henrietta, on her marriage to Dr. John Bryant in 1866. On May 3, 1930, a building permit was issued for the new skyscraper, with construction scheduled to begin no later than June 1. On August 7, the heirs of Dr. John Bryant, "surrounded by hurrying workmen and their ears filled with the clang of riveters," placed family records in the cornerstone of what newspapers began calling the Bryant tower. By November 2, construction was nearly completed on what the Kansas City Star labeled "the most expeditious major building development Kansas City has ever watched." With its completion in 1931, the Bryant Building became the tallest building on Grand Avenue and the fourth tallest in Kansas City.

The Bryant Building is an excellent example of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White's work and is a significant expression of modernistic tendencies in American architecture. The building's fine proportions, the sleek lines, the stylized ornament and form, demonstrate the firm's design acumen. The Bryant Building demonstrates the firm's response to progressive architectural modes, melded with popular taste. The Art Deco form and details of the Bryant Building, succinctly state the master firm's design intentions for the period's skyscrapers.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ George Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri - An Architectural History (Kansas City, Missouri: Lowell Press, 1979) p. 98.
- ² Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) p. 220.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ehrlich, George Kansas City, Missouri An Architectural History (Historic Kansas City Foundation, Kansas City, Missouri, 1979

Frampton, Kenneth Modern Architecture, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, p. 220

Kansas City Star December 1, 1929 p. 1D, August 8, 1939

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings

Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State historic preservation office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☒ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 1 5 3 6 3 2 3 0 4 3 2 8 9 7 0
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

As per legal description: Lots 79 and 80, Swopes Addition, Kansas City, Missouri

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary description corresponds to the legal description of the parcel as recorded in the Kansas City, Missouri Assessment Division.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andrea J. Lazarski, Administrator

organization Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Mo.

date October, 1988

street & number 414 East 12th Street

telephone (816) 274-2555

city or town Kansas City

state Missouri

zip code 64106

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2. Steve Mitchell
National Register Historian and
State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
Date: January 25, 1989
Telephone: 314/751-5376

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Bryant Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

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

Photographer: **M. Betz**

Date

Photographed: **Sept. 1987**

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

- 1 of 8. Photo missing.
- 2 of 8. 11st façade, looking S.
- 3 of 8. Grand Ave., looking NW.
- 4 of 8. Rear façade, looking NE.
- 5 of 8. Grand Ave. entrance, looking W.
- 6 of 8. Detail over Grand Ave. entrance.
- 7 of 8. Interior, mailbox.
- 8 of 8. Interior, detail of molding.

**ALLRIGHT
PARKING**

00 \$4.00 90¢
S AFTER MAXIMUM EACH 20 MINUTES













U S LETTERS



HOURS OF COLLECTION

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	7.00
			</			

◦ LETTER BOX ◦

