

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

McConahay Building, Laugh-O-Gram Films, Incorporated

AND/OR COMMON

Carroll Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1121-1131 East 31st Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#5 Hon. Richard Bolling

STATE

Missouri 64109 29

CODE

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

095

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED (exterior)☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☒ NO (interior)

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Ford c/o Mr. Ben Eisenman

STREET &amp; NUMBER

112 East 10th Street - Room 708

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri 64106

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City Annex

STREET &amp; NUMBER

415 East 12th Street

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64106

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

1. Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri Survey

DATE

1976-77

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64106

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PAGE 1

2. Missouri State Historical Survey  
1977  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

State

## 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 McConahay Building, 1121-1131 East 31st Street in Kansas City, Missouri, is a two-story, six bay rectangular-plan commercial building measuring 100 feet east-west and 52 feet north-south. Erected in 1922,<sup>1</sup> the building is designed in the Tapestry Brick Commercial Style. The main facade faces north. A single story, rectangular concrete cinder block addition, measuring approximately 80 feet east-west and 14 feet north-south, is located along the rear (south) facade. The building contains approximately 16,720 square feet of living space.

#### Construction materials and colors

Rubble limestone is used for the foundation. Pressed red brick veneers over common brick laid primarily in common bond are employed for all facades. terra cotta is used for all decorative details and lugsills. Window trim, door trim, exterior wood obstructions, and metal features of the facades are painted maroon.

#### Openings

North facade. First floor openings consist of five consecutive storefronts with recessed entryways. A red brick pier stands on the northeast corner and is flanked by storefronts on north and east facades. The extreme eastern storefront has a recessed northeast angled doorway. Over this is an entryway flush with the north facade. The original storefront is hidden with wood-paneling. To the right or west are three single-leaf doors with glassed-in fronts on either side, surmounted by leaded glass transoms. These vary in width but basically follow the same design. The first of these, 1129 East 31st Street, is presently an operating commercial enterprise. The others are boarded over with wood paneling. To the west, a fifth storefront, with recessed entryway employs a single-leaf door positioned to the extreme right of the storefront. To the west, a sixth or westernmost storefront employs a recessed entryway positioned at the extreme east of the storefront and is not paneled. With the exception of this final entryway, these two storefronts are completely wood-paneled and are flush with the north facade. Both are surmounted by leaded glass transoms painted maroon. A terra cotta string-course positioned approximately one foot from the ground level borders the north facade. Fenestration of the second-story includes three windows per bay of the two easternmost bays and two per bay the remaining four western bays. Each opening is filled with a one-over-one light, double-hung sash placed in rectangular frames.

West facade. The west facade has a single second-story level, segmental-arched nine-light window light with radiating voussoirs.

South facade. The ground story level is, primarily, spatially encompassed by the connecting single-story addition. Two segmental-arched rectangular enclosed windows are positioned east of this addition. On the second-story, windows are segmental-arched. The three westernmost openings are double width. Most of the windows at this level are enclosed (wood-paneled) and barred. Where visible, the windows consist of one-over-one light, double-hung sash.

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East facade. Two square single-light openings are positioned in the first two southern bays on the first floor. A corner storefront with angled entrance is located at the north end of the facade. It is partially coursed with wood paneling. The extreme south and north bays of the four-bayed second-story are filled with one-over-one light, double-hung sash windows. The two central bays have paired windows.

Roof

A tar-papered, flat roof covers the main building. A tar-papered, low-pitched shed roof sloping in a southern direction covers the rear (south) addition.

Chimneys

A solitary, single-stack brick chimney which projects from the mid-south facade and extends from the roof line of the rear wing to above the primary structure's roof line.

Decorative features

Decorative details include:

- 1) terra cotta lugsills (windows)
- 2) terra cotta stringcourse (lower north facade)
- 3) radiating brick voussoirs (windows)
- 4) Greek fret molding on cornice (above second story windows, north and east facade)
- 5) projected wrought-iron railing above main entrance, the lower edge ornamented
- 6) terra cotta floral motif embellishments (window detail)
- 7) peaked gable on the parapet of north facade aligned directly above main entrance to building
- 8) leaded glass transoms surmounting storefront windows

INTERIORS

Access into the interiors was unobtainable.

ALTERATIONS

Alterations:

Unknown dates:

- 1) addition of wood paneling, storefronts, north and east facades
- 2) addition of wood paneling over most window openings, west, south, east facades
- 3) addition of projecting metal stove pipe flues along north facade (painted maroon)
- 4) construction of a single-story concrete cinder block addition along the south facade

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CONDITION

The entire commercial building and south, rear wing remains in good condition and receives regular maintenance.

SITE

The McConahay Building, once part of a major regional shopping district, is located in the mid-eastern area of Kansas City, Missouri. The building faces north onto Thirty-First Street, a major east-west city artery, and occupies the south-west corner of the intersection of Thirty-First and Forest Streets. Situated north, west, east, and northeast of the McConahay Building, are commercial structures. To the immediate south and west are earthen embankments. The building is constructed on level ground. Property features include a retaining wall to the immediate south which protects the building from an earthen embankment. Additionally, an earthen embankment covered with asphalt lies to the immediate west of the building. Walkways include the concrete sidewalks along the curbs of the intersecting streets.

PRESENT STATUS

The continued existence of the McConahay Building is assured. Privately owned and maintained, the building is included in the "Thirty-First and Troost General Development Plan," a planning study of the Kansas City, City Development Department and the consultant joint venture, Troost-Midtown Associates, to strengthen and assist an effort to control and reverse the trend of economic decline.<sup>2</sup>

FOOTNOTES

1. Building Permit No. 13030, dated 17 February 1922, Building Permit Office, 18th floor south, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri 64106; Western Contractor, Peters Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, Vol. 41, No. 1104, 22 February 1922, p. 38.
2. Troost-Midtown Associates, Thirty-First and Troost General Development Plan, Kansas City, Missouri: (n.p.) c. 1976.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		Prominent Occupant	

SPECIFIC DATES 1922 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Nelle E. Peters

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McConahay Building in Kansas City, Missouri is significant as the first Kansas City location of Laugh-O-Gram Films, Incorporated; the animated cartoon producing enterprise, founded by the internationally renowned film animator and motion picture producer, Walt Disney. Laugh-O-Gram Films, Inc. was one of the earliest initial commercial ventures in film animation that Disney personally engaged in and managed. Laugh-O-Gram Films, Inc. occupied a five room suite of studios on the second floor of the McConahay Building, from the period following the building's completion, ca. May, 1922 to June 1923.<sup>1</sup>

Architecturally, the McConahay Building, erected in 1922, was designed by prominent Kansas City architect, Nelle E. Peters.<sup>2</sup> The Bliss Building Company were the general contractors.<sup>3</sup> The McConahay Building is a fine local example of tapestry brick design architecture; exterior facades are of brickwork interspersed with cut stone and/or terra cotta blocks to form geometric designs. Tapestry brick represented a simplicity in architectural expression based more on functionalism and economics than on aesthetics. It is an outgrowth of the commercial vernacular which evolved in the 1890s and early 1900s and flowered in the building boom following the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

## HISTORICAL DATA

Walter Elias Disney was born on Sunday, December 5, 1901, in northwestern Chicago, Illinois. In April of 1906, the Disney family moved to Marceline, Missouri. The Disney family left Marceline for Kansas City during the Spring of 1910.<sup>5</sup>

In Kansas City, the Disneys resided at 2706 East 31st Street. Walt attended Benton School (presently the D. A. Holmes School), southwest corner, 30th and Benton Boulevard. His earliest efforts in art work began with duplicating political cartoons whereby he developed an ease for caricature. Although his interest in art was never encouraged by his parents, he was allowed to attend childrens' Saturday art classes at the Fine Arts Institute of Kansas City, Missouri (presently the Kansas City Art Institute), then housed in the offices of the Y.W.C.A. Building, 1018-1024 McGee Street.<sup>6</sup>

In 1914, the Disney family moved to 3028 Bellefontaine Avenue. In 1917 when an interest in the O-Zell Jelly Factory in Chicago became available, Disney's parents and his sister, Ruth, embarked on this new enterprise. Disney graduated from Benton School on June 8, 1917, and remained in Kansas City for the summer, working as a candy and news butcher for the Van Noyes Interstate News Company. That fall Walt Disney joined his parents in Chicago to attend McKinley High School. Three nights a week, he studied anatomy, pen technique, and cartooning at the

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Chicago Institute of Art.<sup>7</sup>

When the United States entered World War I, Disney, at sixteen years of age, left school to join the American Red Cross. He was sent overseas and was stationed in France for a year.<sup>8</sup>

After the war, Disney returned to Kansas City in the fall of 1919 in search of employment. Disney was hired as an apprentice at the Pesmen-Rubin Commercial Art Studio in the Gray Advertising Building, 1331 Oak Street. He began the latter part of October through December, 1919, and was terminated that December. A co-worker, Ubbe Iwerks, was terminated at the same time. The two young men formed a partnership called Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists. The business venture lasted only a month. On January 29, 1920, Disney answered a cartoonist ad for the Kansas City Slide Company, 1015 Central Street, a firm which produced animated advertising films. Disney was accepted for the position by A. Vern Cauger, head of the company. After several months, Disney was able to convince the firm to hire his friend, Ub Iwerks. During this interim, the firm's name and address was changed to the Kansas City Film Ad Company, 2449 Charlotte Street. It was during this time that Disney gained experience in animated cartooning, converting the garage behind his 3028 Bellefontaine Avenue residence into a studio. Meanwhile, the Disney family's investment in the jelly factory in Chicago failed and they claimed bankruptcy. The Disney family returned to Kansas City. Later in November, 1922, they moved to Portland, Oregon. Walt Disney remained in Kansas City.<sup>9</sup>

Disney left his position with Kansas City Film Ad Company and on May 23, 1922, he incorporated Laugh-O-Gram Films. He was joined by Ub Iwerks and five other film animators. In the early months of incorporation, Laugh-O-Gram was commissioned by a non-theatrical distribution company, Pictorial Clubs, to produce several cartoons. Within their offices on the second floor of the McConahay Building, Laugh-O-Gram produced for Pictorial Clubs: The Four Musicians of Bremen (Bremen Town Musicians), Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Puss and Boots, and Cinderella.<sup>10</sup>

By mid-year of 1922, Laugh-O-Gram were contracted by the Jenkins Music Company to make a film illustrating the song, "Martha." In December, 1922, Disney created the film, Tommy Tucker's Tooth, for dentist Thomas B. McCrum, to promote dental health. The last major enterprise by Laugh-O-Gram, Inc. was Alice's Wonderland which was never completed. By July, 1923, debts were increasing and becoming difficult to pay. Disney was forced to take up lodging in the Laugh-O-Gram offices. Resigned to bankruptcy with no future prospects in Kansas City, Disney left Kansas City in July, 1923, with a one-way ticket to California and 40 dollars in cash.<sup>11</sup>

In California, Disney and his enterprises flourished. Before his death in 1966, Disney had entertained and educated three generations of Americans. In animated films, he developed and popularized a whole new medium of art and entertainment.

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As entertainment's most successful practitioner, he pioneered feature length color cartoons, popularized nature films, and expanded into adventure, comedy, and musical films. His legendary success of his vast amusement park, Disneyland, not only set a pattern for additional park projects, but also a precedent for a new approach to "systems" architecture, laying a heavy influence on city planning and design. From organizations and governments around the world, Disney was honored and awarded for significant contributions to the art of visual communications. Disney's impact on American society, its culture and architecture, has resulted from a most successful combination of a multitude of ideas and industry on art, music, technology, and the better qualities of human nature.

Various major works and productions included:

1. Mickey Mouse (Special Academy Award Winner) and Silly Symphonies since 1928
2. Three Little Pigs, 1933 (Academy Award Winner)
3. Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, 1938 (Academy Award Winner).
4. Fantasia, 1940 (New York Film Critics Award Winner, Special Academy Award Winner)
5. Pinocchio, 1940 (Academy Award Winner)
6. Dumbo, 1941 (Academy Award Winner)
7. Bambi, 1942
8. Song of the South, 1946 (Academy Award Winner)
9. Cinderella, 1950
10. Treasure Island, 1950
11. Alice in Wonderland, 1951
12. Peter Pan, 1953
13. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, 1954 (Academy Award Winner)
14. Founder of Disneyland as base for television productions, 1954
15. Producer Disneyland television and "Mickey Mouse Club" television programs over ABC-Television, 1954
16. "Walt Disney Presents," 1958-1961
17. "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color," NBC-Television, 1961-present
18. Kidnapped, 1960
19. Swiss Family Robinson, 1960
20. Pollyanna, 1960 (Special Academy Award Winner)
21. Babes In Toyland, 1961
22. Mary Poppins, 1964 (Academy Award Winner).<sup>12</sup>

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." The McConahay Building is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as examples of the themes of "Architecture" "Fine Arts and Humanities," "Society," "Economics," and "Technology."



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FOOTNOTES

1. Building Permit No. 13030, dated 17 February 1922, Building Permit Office, 18th floor south, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri, 64106; Bob Thomas, Walt Disney, An American Original, (New York: Simon and Schuster Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 62-69, passim.
2. Western Contractor, (Peters Publishing Co., Kansas City, Missouri), Vol. 41, No. 1104, 22 February 1922, p. 38
3. Ibid.
4. Kansas City, Missouri Downtown Plan: Historic Building Preservation Analysis, (Kansas City, Missouri, Johnson, Brickell, Mulcahy and Associates, Inc., September, 1973), p. 16
5. Thomas, Walt Disney, An American Original, pp. 24-32
6. Ibid., pp. 33-39; 1915 Kansas City, Missouri City Directory, (Kansas City, Missouri: Gate City Directory, 1915) p. 737
7. Thomas, Walt Disney, An American Original, pp. 33-45
8. Ibid., pp. 46-52
9. Ibid., pp. 53-61
10. Ibid., p. 62
11. Ibid., pp. 63-66
12. Leonard Maltin, The Disney Films (New York, N.Y.: Crown Publishing, Inc. c. 1973), n.pp.; Who's Who in America, (Chicago: Marquis-Who's Who Inc., 1964-1965), p. 523

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

NONAD UNDER

1. Building Permit, No. 13030, dated 17 February 1922, Building Permit Office, 18th floor south, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri 64106
2. Johnson, Brickell, Mulcahy and Associates, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri Downtown Plan: Historic Building Preservation Analysis. Kansas City, Missouri, September, 1973.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one (1)

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 364170 4325550  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C

B                    
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

N/70 FT OF E 100 FT LOT 1 WITHERS PLACE

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

1. Victoria C. Karel, Researcher

ORGANIZATION

Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

DATE

May 16, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall, 26th Floor E., 414 East 12th Street

TELEPHONE

(816) 274-2555

CITY OR TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64106

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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

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

DATE

9-23-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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3. Kansas City, Missouri City Directory: 1915. Gate City Directory Company: 1024 Wyandotte Street, Kansas City, Missouri (1915).
4. Maltin, Leonard. The Disney Films. New York, N.Y.: Crown Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1973. n.pp.
5. Thomas, Bob. Walt Disney, An American Original. New York: Simon and Schuster Publishing Company, 1976. pp. 24-32, 33-39, 40, 41-43, 45-47, 52-61, 62, 63-66, 62-69, passim
6. Troost-Midtown Associates. Thirty-First and Troost General Development Plan: A Planning Study for Troost - Midtown Association. Kansas City, Missouri, ca. 1976.
7. Western Contractor. Peters Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri. Vol. 41, No. 1104. 22 February 1922, p. 38
8. Who's Who in America. Vol. 33, Chicago, Illinois: Marquis-Who's Who Inc., 1964-1965, p. 523

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2. Edward J. Mischuk, Chief Research Historian  
Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri (816) 274-2555  
City Hall, 26th Floor E., 414 East 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle  
"Kansas City" (1975)  
Scale: 1:24,000  
McConahay Building

UTM Reference:  
15/364170/4325550



**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **McConahay Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

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

Photographer: **Victoria Karel**

Date

Photographed: **Mar. 1977**

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

- 1 of 8. N façade, view looking SE.
- 2 of 8. N façade, view looking W.
- 3 of 8. SE corner, view looking NW, showing S façade on left and E façade on right.
- 4 of 8. W façade, view looking SE.
- 5 of 8. Detail of W façade, view looking NE.
- 6 of 8. S façade, view looking NE.
- 7 of 8. Detail of main entrance, view looking SE.
- 8 of 8. Detail of second story window fenestration above main entrance, view looking S.



















