

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

MAR 05 '98

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Milk Bottle Grocery

other names/site number Triangle Barbecue/Triangle Grocery & Market

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2. Location

=====

street & number 2426 North Classen Boulevard not for publication N/A  
city or town Oklahoma City vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109  
zip code 73106





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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: specialty store  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: restaurant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
roof ASPHALT  
walls BRICK  
  
other PLYWOOD/PARTICLE BOARD  
STEEL

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
8. Statement of Significance  
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1930  
1948  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)  
=====

Significant Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
        N/A    

Cultural Affiliation     N/A      
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder     UNKNOWN      
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)  
 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary Location of Additional Data  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
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Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>633160</u>	<u>3928650</u>	3	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
2	<u>N/A</u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	4	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Jocelyn Lupkin

organization Robison & Associates Architects date September 17, 1997

street & number 2927 The Paseo telephone 405/524-4544

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73103

=====  
Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form  
Milk Bottle Grocery  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. John Kilpatrick

street & number P.O. Box 60187 telephone 405/272-0311

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73146

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  Oklahoma County, Oklahoma    
county and State

=====

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

**Summary**

The Milk Bottle Grocery is a detached, triangular, Commercial Style brick building built in 1930. It is located in a busy inner city commercial area that is characterized by newer and renovated strip shopping developments. The building is built in the right of way of a major commercial street, Classen Boulevard, in a portion of the street where it cuts diagonally through an orthogonal street layout. The triangular plan is a direct result of the diagonal cut, and the building footprint takes up almost every square inch of the resulting triangle. The outside face of the wall is a few inches from the curb on two sides, and a narrow sidewalk separates the building from the third side, facing Classen Boulevard. (Refer Photo #1) Although two windows have been modified with plywood infill, the building has retained a high degree of integrity.

**Exterior Description**

The Milk Bottle Grocery building is one-story, approximately 11 feet tall, and has a triangular plan. The building appears to be brick bearing walls. Exterior brick is laid in a running bond. At two places where exterior brick walls intersect at angles greater than ninety degrees, the bricks are left uncut, with the result that overlapping edges project slightly beyond the wall plane and resulting gaps are left open. (Refer Photo #2) The roof is flat. The building is small, with a gross area of approximately 350 square feet. The interior is one small triangular room with a small bathroom at the north end.

The southwest elevation, facing Classen Boulevard, has a central single door flanked by large rectangular fixed windows. Sheltering both the door and two windows is a fabric awning. (Refer Photo #1)

The east elevation has a small hung window on the south end and a single door on the north end. The above grade door has two wood steps. The lower step extends just slightly past the curblin into the street. Off-center and just to the south of the door on the east elevation, is a larger window that has been modified with plywood infill and an aluminum pass through window. (Refer Photo #2 and #3)

The north elevation has two drain spouts and one large asymmetrically placed window completely infilled with plywood. (Refer Photo #3)

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The building's window and door heads are surmounted by a brick soldier course and the windows have rowlock sills. A plain plywood cornice with horizontal battens at the top and bottom and vertical battens at eight foot intervals caps the building.

The most noteworthy feature of the Milk Bottle Grocery is a disproportionately large sheet metal milk bottle on a steel angle structure that is located at the approximate center of the rooftop. (Refer Photo #4) The sheet metal is riveted, screwed and bolted onto the structure. The bottle is elevated above the rooftop and is a prominent feature on Classen Boulevard. The bottle appears to be approximately eight feet in diameter and almost as tall as the building itself. The bottle is painted white, and a graphic advertisement for a company which sells dairy products is painted on the bottle. Considerable attention was given to the shaping of the bottle and cap. Sheet metal in continuous thin strips was placed vertically to achieve the round bottle shape, a slightly rounded base, a tapered neck, and a rimmed top. The cap has a crenelated configuration at the top that mimics the folded paper caps that were used to close milk bottles.

The milk bottle was not an original feature of the building. From the names of businesses that occupied the building, the milk bottle was apparently added to the original triangular building in about 1948 when it became the Milk Bottle Grocery. Prior to that, the business in the building was the Triangle Grocery and Market. The bottle was and is rented separately from the building for advertising. The present advertisement painted on the bottle is not original; however, it continues a tradition of the bottle being used for advertising by companies which sell dairy products. The previous advertisement on the bottle was for Townley's Dairy, which took over the lease of the bottle from Steffen's Dairy in the late 1950's.

Both the building and the bottle are in very good condition and have retained a high degree of integrity.

**Alterations**

The building's interior was damaged in a fire in the spring of 1993, but the exterior was not damaged. The exterior has undergone only minor modifications. One window has been altered by the infill of plywood and a smaller aluminum pass through window. Another window has been completely infilled with plywood. On both windows, the original headers and sills are still visible.

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Although the milk bottle is not an original feature of the building, it was added to the building fifty years ago and is now an important defining historic attribute of the building. The advertising on the bottle has been changed but it continues the tradition of the milk bottle advertising local dairies.

Overall, the Milk Bottle Grocery retains its integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Milk Bottle Grocery is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of a small, triangular shaped, Commercial Style building which features a large, distinctive milk bottle advertisement on top of the building. The building was constructed in 1930. With the construction of the giant milk bottle on top of the building in about 1948, the building became known as the Milk Bottle Grocery. Because the name "Milk Bottle Grocery" reflects the addition of the milk bottle to the building, it is the most indicative of the property's significance.

The Milk Bottle Grocery is one of the most distinguishable landmarks in Oklahoma City, due in large part to the unique roof-top milk bottle. The Milk Bottle Grocery is significant as an unusually small size and distinctive, triangular, lot-shaped building and for the giant, carefully executed and preserved milk bottle on its roof, an outstanding example of advertising as an overtly outsized sculptural form.

The Milk Bottle Grocery is a diminutive triangular building constructed on nearly every available square foot of a small triangular plot. The shape of the property is a result of the intersection of the Belle Isle street car line with the dominant orthogonal street pattern. The path of the street car line ran diagonal to the street grid. The location of the grocery was a stop on the line<sup>1</sup> and the street, Classen Boulevard, still has a diagonal jog in that immediate area.

There are few triangular lot-shaped buildings in Oklahoma City. Five triangular shaped buildings of varying sizes have been identified in Oklahoma City. Two of them, the two-story Heierding Building and the two-story Plaza Court building (the "[1]argest triangle building in the capital"<sup>2</sup>), are already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. East of the Heierding Building is a two-story, buff brick, triangular shaped building. The fifth triangular shaped building in Oklahoma City is at 5801 North Western. This building was built in about 1968. The one-story Milk Bottle Grocery is unique in that it is the smallest of all of these buildings, and it is the only one that features an oversized advertising device as a part of the architecture.

The first listing of the building in the Oklahoma City city directory is for a Cooper Cleaner & Dyer. Subsequent listings for different businesses include the Oklahoma Realty & Investment Company, the Classen Fruit Market, the Triangle

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Barbeque and, from 1940 until 1948, the Triangle Grocery. The 1949 listing shows the name changed to the Milk Bottle Grocery. This name change is indicative that the bottle was probably added to the original building sometime during 1948.

As Classen Boulevard, the major street that the Milk Bottle Grocery faces, became an increasingly busy commercial thoroughfare, the appeal of advertising to the passing traffic mounted. Window displays would be almost impossible to see from a passing car and there was no room for a free-standing sign. The little building was, and still is, marooned in a sea of vehicular traffic. The only place left on the lot for an advertisement was the roof, and any advertising device at roof height would have to be sufficiently eye-catching to make an impact on passing traffic.

The appeal of roof-top advertising was reinforced when "Classen Boulevard was widened to six lanes about (in) 1950..."<sup>3</sup> The widening of the street resulted in an encroachment on the frontage of the property down to the width of a narrow sidewalk and a space for parallel parking.

The idea of using large-scale objects as a direct and literal form of advertising had a precedent in other parts of the country. "The drive-ins of the thirties...recognized that, for a commercial building, advertising is a legitimate function to be expressed in architectural form. To make a relatively small building visible to customers from far down the street, the entire building was conceived as a sign to attract customers. Stands in the shape of fanciful giant objects, animals, fruits, and foods, an architectural onomatopoeia, used bold scale as a design concept..."<sup>4</sup> With the success of any business in the tiny building increasingly dependent upon customers in automobiles being able to identify it from a distance down the street, and because of its proximity to a busy commercial thoroughfare, the Milk Bottle Grocery was an ideal subject for a bold advertising statement.

In the case of the Milk Bottle Grocery, the building was not originally conceived as a sign, but was modified later in an imaginative way that preserved the original building and successfully made the building one of the most recognizable advertising tools in Oklahoma City. Thus, Oklahoma City was graced with a giant milk bottle which continues to be a familiar object of affection to everyone who passes by.

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**Endnotes**

1. Ibid., p. 8.
  2. "Those Pie-Shaped Buildings," Orbit Magazine (January 6, 1978): p. 9.
  3. The Sunday Oklahoman, April 16, 1984, Section B, p. 2.
  4. Hess, Alan. Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture (San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books, 1985), 26-27.
- =====

**Bibliography**

- Hess, Alan. Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture. San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books, 1985.
- Oklahoma City City Directory, 1931-87. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Orbit Magazine, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 6 January 1978.
- The Sunday Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 16 April 1984.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

A tract of land in the South Half (S $\frac{1}{2}$ ) of the Southeast Quarter (SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section Twenty (20), Township Twelve (12) North, Range Three (3) West of the Indian Meridian in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, described as follows: COMMENCING at a point at the east side of Classen Boulevard where the south curb line of Twenty-fourth Street intersects the north and east line of Classen Boulevard; THENCE in a southeasterly direction adjoining, contiguous and parallel to the north and east line of Classen boulevard for a distance of Fifty feet and Six inches (50'-6"); THENCE North Thirty-nine (39) feet parallel with the west line of Lot 11 in Block 2 of S.J. YOUNG'S ADDITION to Oklahoma City, to an intersection with the south curb line of Twenty-fourth Street, THENCE West Thirty-two (32) feet along and parallel to the south curb line of Twenty-fourth Street to the point or place of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Milk Bottle Grocery.



Milk Bottle Building



MILK BOTTLE GROCERY  
2426 NORTH CLASSEN BLVD.  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.  
UTM: 14 633160 3928650

OKLAHOMA CITY QUADRANGLE  
OKLAHOMA

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

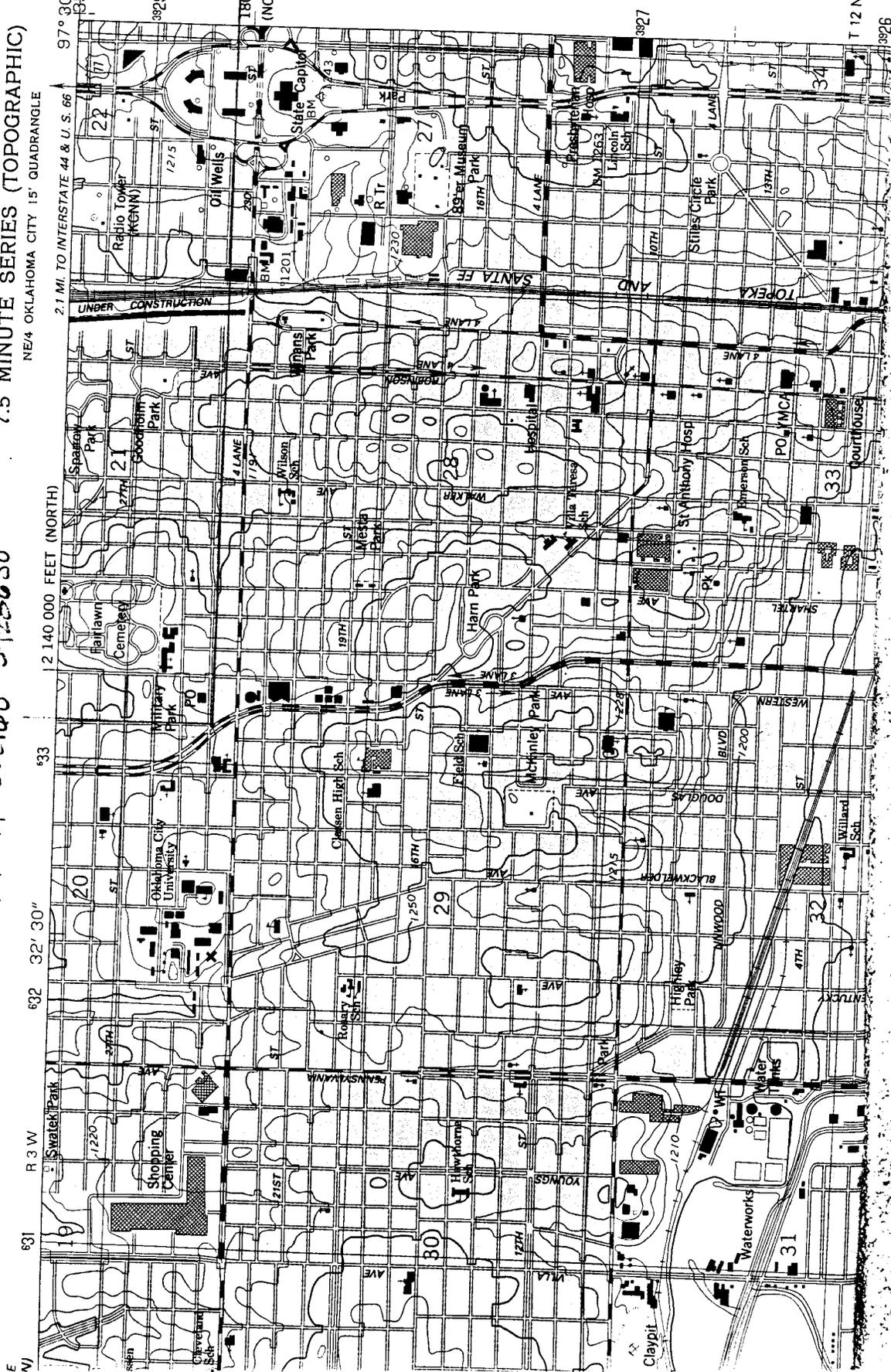
NE/4 OKLAHOMA CITY 15' QUADRANGLE

2.1 MI. TO INTERSTATE 44 & U.S. 66

12 140 000 FEET (NORTH)

180 000 FEET (NORTH)

6955 III SW  
(SPENCER)



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R 3 W

632 32' 30"

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12 140 000 FEET (NORTH)

97° 30'

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