

## ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

LITTLE ROCK MAIN STREET MULTIPLE  
RESOURCE AREA, LITTLE ROCK, PULASKI COUNTSurvey Number LR0026Owner Rockworth AssociatesProperty Name Gus Blass Department StoreAddress 324 Main Street

Original Name \_\_\_\_\_

Little Rock, AR 72201Location 318-24 Main StreetConstruction Date 1912

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The seven-story Gus Blass Department Store, one of Little Rock's earliest "skyscrapers", is a good example of Sullivanesque architecture with Neo-classical details. Its architect, George Mann, took pains to clearly delineate the three elements of the Sullivanesque style. The two-story base is clad, on its east and south elevations, in decorative white terra cotta that features ornaments composed of eagles encircled by wreaths. The base is framed with egg and dart molding. In stark contrast with the base, the shaft is simply finished in buff brick. Both the spandrel panels and vertical components of the facade were kept narrow, thus emphasizing the building's verticality and permitting large windows. The shaft rises four more stories and is terminated by a horizontal terra cotta band between the sixth and seventh stories. Large terra cotta cartouches and dentil work accent this band. A row of small attic windows and an imposing copper-clad cornice which is supported by massive brackets, "crown" this impressive structure. During 1975 renovation, the street-level store fronts and the primary entrances, located in the east and south facades, were recessed. The original double-hung windows have been replaced throughout the Blass Building with stationary panes; on the upper floors, the three-part division of the new windows is similar to the original.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by George R. Mann, the most distinguished Arkansas building designer of the early 20th Century, the Guss Blass Department Store was built in two phases during 1912-13. One half of the structure was completed and occupied while work continued on the other half. Significant from an engineering standpoint, the Blass Department Store was one of the earliest examples of two-way flat slab concrete construction in America. Later, it was the first Arkansas department store to be air conditioned (1936) and to have an escalator (1948). The original tenant, the Gus Blass Company, was founded in 1871 and remained in business until the early 1970's. It was the state's largest department store for many years, and played an important role in the downtown retail community. The property, owned by members of the David D. Terry family since 1868, was sold in 1974 to First American Bankstock Corporation (FABCO) who adapted the upper floors of the store for office use.

Level of Significance: State

Verbal Boundary Description Lot 7, 8, Block 76, Original CityAcreage Less than oneQuadrangle Name Little Rock, Arkansas Quadrangle Scale 1:24000

UTM Reference

Zone 15Easting 566720Northing 3844840

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