1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Chevrolet Motor Company Building
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Hesse Envelope Company (1948-1965), Futura Lofts

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 3221 Commerce
CITY OR TOWN: Dallas
STATE: Texas
CODE: TX
COUNTY: Dallas
CODE: 113
ZIP CODE: 75226

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

[Signature]

Date

2/21/03

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register

[ ] determined eligible for the National Register

[ ] removed from the National Register

[ ] other (explain):

[Signature of the Keeper]

[Signature]  Date of Action

4/16/03
5. CLASSIFICATION

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CONTRIBUTING</th>
<th>NONCONTRIBUTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 BUILDINGS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 SITES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 STRUCTURES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 OBJECTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility = factory

GOVERNMENT/government office (1936-1940)

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling = apartment building

7. DESCRIPTION

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style

**MATERIALS:**

- **FOUNDATION:** CONCRETE
- **WALLS:** CONCRETE, BRICK
- **ROOF:** CONCRETE
- **OTHER:** STEEL, GLASS

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-7).
The 1923 Chevrolet Motor Company Building is a 4-story Commercial Style concrete and brick building at 3221 Commerce Street, in a historically commercial and industrial area east of downtown Dallas, Texas. Designed by the Dallas firm Lang and Witchell, the flat-roofed building features an expressed concrete structure separating wide window bays and red brick spandrels. Like many buildings in the area, the open, industrial plan of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building has recently been divided into apartments for residential reuse. With few exterior changes, the building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity.

Facing south on Commerce Street, the Chevrolet Motor Company Building rises straight up from the edge of the sidewalk and occupies most of its flat urban site. Although the outward appearance of the surrounding area has changed little from its commercial and industrial beginnings, it has been gradually transformed in recent years into an urban residential neighborhood, with most buildings now converted for use as apartments, condos and retail shops. This change is reflected well in the Chevrolet Motor Company Building’s site. An alley on the north side was closed off to add a small pool and a 1-story triangular building attached to the east side was converted to a courtyard, but the landscaping remains sparse.

The footprint of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building is nearly rectangular, with the northeast corner chamfered at about a 30-degree angle. The building’s functional design emphasizes the relatively light structural system and includes only a minimal amount of simple geometric ornamentation. Concrete columns, expressed as pilasters and capped with simple triangular capitals, define each bay. Thinner concrete beams that also serve as lintels divide the 4 stories, each of which typically includes a wide expanse of divided-light metal windows and a brick spandrel that articulates the area of the floor structure. The typical window configuration of each bay includes two 25-light (5x5) metal windows in the center with a 20-light (4x5) window on each side of that pair. The four windows, which share a continuous concrete sill, are divided only by shared vertical mullions. A smaller portion of each window, 3/3 on the 25-light and 2/2 on the 20-light, opens as an awning window, but the other panes are fixed. Most of the building’s ornamentation is confined to the simply detailed brick parapet on the south and east elevations. Small concrete squares are inset above each of the columns, and a continuous concrete coping defines the parapet cap, which steps up at each corner. A decorative concrete ornament, shaped like a niche topped with a chevron, is centered on each stepped portion of the parapet.

The south elevation, which is six bays across, includes the building’s main entrance and is its primary façade. The central four bays on the first floor are typical of the building, although the brick spandrels are slightly shorter to allow for a concrete water table. The first floor of bay one was a truck-loading bay. Evidence of the original rolling metal door remains, but the opening was filled with a 12-light (3x4) metal window with corrugated metal above and below in the rehabilitation. The building’s main entrance is on the first floor of bay six. A pair of aluminum doors, each with three glass panes, was used to replace the original doors, and a small
metal awning was added above. The bay also has two transoms, a 4/4 replacement transom above the awning and an original trio of 3/3 transoms in the bay’s upper left corner. All of the remaining bays on the south elevation are typical of the building except the second floor of bay two, which has a much taller brick spandrel and a series of four, 4/4 fixed transoms. A tall, lighted sign was added to the southeast corner column of the building’s conversion to apartments. An attached 1-story concrete building extends off the south elevation to the east. Its roof and windows were removed during the rehabilitation and replaced with open steel frames to make a walled courtyard. A similar concrete wall was added to the west side of the south elevation, connecting the main building with a 1-story detached garage.

The west elevation is five bays across and differs from the building’s typical elevations. The concrete columns and beams are flush with the brick infill, as is its unadorned concrete parapet. Bay one is 5 stories tall, and all stories of bays one and five are bricked in with no windows. Bays two, three and four typically include only two of the building’s 25-light windows, separated by additional brick infill, and the second floor of bay four has only one. A painted sign across the parapet that read, “Dallas Secured Record Storage” was covered with solid white paint in the rehabilitation.

The north elevation is six bays across, with bay one being the building’s angled northeast corner. The angle of bay one makes it slightly wider than the building’s typical bays, and its window configuration, on the second, third and fourth stories, includes four 25-light windows. The first floor of bay one was a loading dock with overhead metal doors, but a pair of aluminum doors was added to replace those. Like bay one on the west side, bay six of the north elevation is 5 stories tall, and its bays are filled entirely with brick. With a few exceptions, the remaining bays are typical of the building. The first floor of bay two includes an original 30-light (6x5) metal window with a 4/4 operable awning portion and a 12-light window used to replace a rolling metal door opening, as was done on the south elevation. The first floor of bay four has only one 15-light (3x5) replacement aluminum window. The parapet on the north elevation is brick and includes the triangular column capitals, but it lacks the additional ornamentation found on the south and east sides.

The east elevation is five bays across, but bay five, which adjoins the chamfered corner, is much narrower than the typical bays. Bay five is just wide enough for one of the building’s 20-light windows. Each story of bay one includes two 30-light (6x5) metal windows with 4/4 operable awning portions divided by a vertical strip of brick infill. On the first floor, one of those windows was altered to add a flush metal door. The first floor of bay two has the same window configuration as bay one. The remaining bays resemble those typical of the building, but they are slightly narrower. The central two windows in the typical four-window arrangement are therefore only 15-light (3x5), yet with a 3/3 operable awning portion. Again, a 1-story triangular building is attached to the east elevation and has been converted to a walled courtyard.
The building's original plan, which included some 60,000 square feet of open, multi-functional space, has recently been divided into apartments for residential use. With only minor exterior changes, however, the Chevrolet Motor Company Building retains its integrity of design, materials and workmanship. Fairly dramatic changes impacted the building's surroundings during the 1920s and 1930s, but the neighborhood's appearance has changed relatively little since then. Despite recent changes in use, the commercial and industrial character of the neighborhood remains and the building retains much of the setting and feeling that it would have had during its period of significance.
8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

X 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.

X C  PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESS K HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Industry, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1923-1952

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1923

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Architect = Lang & Witchell; Builder = Hughes-O’Rourke Construction Co.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-14).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-15 through 9-16).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):

_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_ previously listed in the National Register
x 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:

x State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission)
_ Other state agency
_ Federal agency
_ Local government
_ University
_ Other -- Specify Repository:
Statement of Significance

At the time of its construction, Dallas’s 1923 Chevrolet Motor Company Building, 3221 Commerce Street, was an important addition to the city’s burgeoning automotive industry. Although dozens of automobile-related business were already established, only Ford was actually building cars in Dallas. With its transportation network and increasing commercial prominence, however, Dallas was rapidly becoming a regional manufacturing center. Much of the new industrial development was concentrated near the growing Fair Park Industrial District, on the eastern end of the Deep Ellum neighborhood. The Chevrolet Motor Company Building was built on an especially advantageous site in the district, adjacent to the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks and just east of Dallas’s “automobile row,” which was concentrated near Commerce Street and Central Avenue. Designed by the renowned Dallas architecture firm of Lang and Witchell, the building is also an excellent example of the increasingly functional aesthetic of 1920s Commercial Style buildings. It is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Industry and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, both at the local level of significance.

Development of Deep Ellum and the Fair Park Industrial District

The 1920s were a prosperous time for Dallas, having become the financial center of what the city’s fathers touted as the “largest cotton-producing region in the world.” The prosperity spread throughout the city, and a local shopping and entertainment district east of the Central Business District was undergoing an economic expansion of its own. Known as “Deep Ellum,” a name derived from the local pronunciation of Elm Street, the area was initially settled as a freedman’s colony and had historically been an area of African-American settlement. When the Texas and Pacific (T&P) Railroad arrived in 1873, it chose to build its depot in Deep Ellum, and a small business district developed around it with hotels, taverns, restaurants and worker shacks. The area immediately around the T&P depot was also used for stock yards.

Deep Ellum’s growth was further encouraged by the 1887 arrival of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe (GC&SF) Railway. With three rail lines now crossing east of downtown and a dense land use already existing in the West End Historic District, a new industrial area began to emerge in and around Deep Ellum. Although now used in reference to a larger area, what was originally known as Deep Ellum ended around the 2500 block of Elm Street. Industrial buildings were primarily concentrated in the less densely developed area just east of Deep Ellum proper. As one of the largest industries to move to this area, the Munger Cotton Machine Company (NR 1983, Continental Gin Company) set the stage for a new industrial area now known as the Fair Park Industrial District, when they relocated there in 1888 and expanded in 1912 and 1914.

A variety of services emerged to serve these new people and uses, and, at its height in the 1920s, Deep Ellum would include bakeries, shoe shine parlors, clothing, shoe and jewelry stores, furniture, dry goods and drug stores, as well as cafes, meat and fish markets, warehouses, nightclubs, dance halls, and hotels. The
concentration and mixture of businesses made the area into something that writers later described as “reminiscent of Harlem.”

The Chevrolet Motor Company Building was built in what was then an area of transition between Deep Ellum and the Fair Park Industrial District. As shown on the 1921 Sanborn Map, the area surrounding the future site of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building was still largely residential, with several large houses lining Commerce Street between Trunk and Murray and a number of smaller, shotgun houses immediately south.(Figure-17) The site was also adjacent to the T&P railroad tracks, however, and the encroachment of commercial and industrial development was already underway. Construction on the same block of two distribution centers, the 1910 Lincoln Paint and Color Company (NR 2001) and the 1913 Interstate Forwarding Company Warehouse (NR 1992), had already identified the immediate area with the eastward industrial expansion. Along with other newly constructed buildings, including the 1920 Texas Farm and Ranch Building (NR 1999) and the 1921 Dallas Tent and Awning Building (NR 1999), the Chevrolet Motor Company Building helped solidify the area’s manufacturing base, and by the 1930s the neighborhood’s transition from residential to industrial use was largely complete (Singleton 3). The 1951 Sanborn Map clearly demonstrates the extent of the change, with most of the houses gone and almost no residential uses remaining.(Figure-18)

Development of the Automotive Industry in Dallas

The first automobile arrived in Dallas, Texas in 1899. Within three years, the city’s first automobile dealership, Lipscomb & Garret, had opened for business at 301 Main Street, where they served as agents for the now defunct Locomobile Company of America. By 1905 the company was joined by several other dealerships. Parlin & Orendorf Implement Company sold Cadillacs at 156-158 Elm Street, and the Fort Worth and Dallas Automobile Company operated an agency, garage, and store room at 319 Commerce for Winton, Columbia, and Oldsmobile. The S.H. Boren Automobile Company at 361-371 Commerce Street and Studebaker Bros. Manufacturing Company, 317 Commerce Street, rounded out the city’s first listings for automobile dealerships. (Simpson 3)

By 1910 there were thirty-seven such companies and an “automobile row” had developed just east of Dallas’s 1914 City Hall (NR 2002, Dallas Downtown Historic District), in the 2000 block of Commerce Street between Harwood and Good Streets. (Ibid: 21) In that same year the State Fair held the first automobile show in Texas, which became an annual spring event thereafter. Among the makes offered were included Ford, Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac, Dodge, and Oldsmobile, in addition to the Kissel Kar, Hupmobile, Stearns, Paige, Marion and Milburn Electric. (Ibid: 32)

The public’s insatiable appetite for new motor vehicles brought about the formation of an equally large service industry for gasoline, oil, automobile accessories and repairs, and above all, rubber tires. The arrival of national tire companies like B.F. Goodrich, Goodyear, and Firestone to Dallas coincided with the explosive growth of
the automobile industry in the early twentieth century. The city directories of the period indicated that as many
tire companies opened in the city as automobile dealerships. Also located along Commerce Street, they were
interspersed among the showrooms.

During the same period, Dallas was developing into a major manufacturing and wholesale market for all kinds
of goods. Major railways linked Dallas to other urban areas like Chicago and St. Louis, and the discovery of oil
in East Texas garnered the city further prominence as a commercial and trade center. As automobile
manufacturers adopted a model of regional assembly, then, Dallas quickly emerged as a prime locale.

The introduction of Henry Ford’s Model T in 1908 opened up the possibility of automobile assembly in Texas
and other regional centers around the United States. The Model T was designed with a series of standardized
parts and an engine case that was essentially one piece. This allowed for simple, standardized assembly
anywhere that the parts could be shipped, a much cheaper method than shipping finished automobiles.
(Jennings: 40-50) The “Ford way,” as described in a 1924 company brochure, was to construct assembly plants
in strategic trade centers throughout the country. The brochure stated that the assembly plants “receive standard
parts from the manufacturing plants and assemble them into finished cars and trucks. This calls for chassis
assembly, body building and all paint trim and upholstery work. The branches all operate under the same
systems, use the same standard tools and build cars in the same way.” Along moving assembly lines, cars could
quickly be pieced together, literally from the wheels up.

Dallas had a Ford sales, service and parts store by 1909. The company began to disperse its assembly
operations around 1912, and by 1913 Fords were being assembled in Dallas, in their sales, service and parts
building. By September of 1913, a site at 2700-2724 Canton Street was selected for a new Ford assembly plant
and on July 4, 1914 the new building was opened. The significance of the Ford Factory to Dallas cannot be
underestimated. It was the first automobile assembly plant built in the Southwest by any of the major
manufacturers, and it was built to supply North Texas, Western Louisiana and Southern Oklahoma.

A 1914 Daily Times Herald article proclaimed, “the eyes of the world are turned toward Dallas as the
automobile center of the Southwest. Dallas is the distribution center for the Southwest which is fast becoming
motor car country.” The article went on to predict that the 1914 season “will break all auto trade records.” The
January 1914 Dallas Spirit, a Chamber of Commerce publication, proclaimed “Dallas Automobile Market
Covers the Southwest!” According to that article, in 1913 over 11,900 automobiles sold in Dallas for a total of
$12,341,339. With motorcycle and tire sales included, this number jumps to over $18 million.

The automotive industry continued to grow and thrive. In 1915, 5,504 cars were assembled at the Dallas Ford
plant, with each Model T selling for $440. The demand was so great that another plant was quickly built in Fort
Worth, but it was abandoned after only six months of operation and consolidated with Dallas. By 1917, there
were enough Ford dealers with repair departments that the company closed the one housed in the factory and
used the extra space for assembly. After 1924, Ford stopped the lines in its building on Canton and moved to a larger plant on East Grand (the Canton building was still used for display and storage). By then, however, nearly 47,000 Model T cars had been assembled in Dallas, and Ford had become the city's largest employer.

The impact of the auto industry on the city was nothing short of phenomenal. By the 1920s, Dallas's "automobile row" was firmly established, with the highest concentration of automotive businesses near the intersection of Commerce Street and Central Avenue. (Figure-18) The city had become what one period writer described as "the chief distributing center for automobiles and (automotive products)" (Dallas Magazine 1922: 24). The writer continued by stating that in 1920 alone, the "wholesale business in automobile-related products had succeeded in reaching $200,000,000, (roughly) one-third of the total wholesale business of (the city) for that year." (Ibid)

Chevrolet Motor Company Building

Like most early American automobile manufacturers, Chevrolet Motor Company followed closely behind the lead of Henry Ford, and they had begun to establish their own regional assembly network by 1916. Chevrolet did open a plant in Texas that year (in an expansion that also included new plants in Bay City, Michigan, Toledo, Ohio and Oakland, California), but they chose Fort Worth for their site in the Southwest. The Fort Worth assembly plant built Chevrolet's "490" series, a car designed to compete directly with Ford's Model T, even drawing its name from the Model T's typical price of $490. (Dammann 19) The Fort Worth plant produced 2,841 of the "490's" in 1917, and they were nearly as popular as their competitor. (Dammann 22) The 490 series sold faster than any other Chevrolet model and began the Ford vs. Chevrolet competition that continues today. (Langworth 25)

In 1923, five years after General Motors had acquired Chevrolet, the company was adjusting to some significant changes. A.P. Sloan replaced Pierre DuPont as President and CEO while DuPont remained as Chairman. In the same year, G.M. introduced a new model, the "Superior Series B," to replace the popular "490." Perhaps in coordination with these other adjustments, the company decided to move its Southwestern Headquarters from Fort Worth to Dallas. Like the Fort Worth plant before it, the Dallas assembly plant was part of a broader General Motors expansion that included new plants in St. Louis, Memphis, and Denver. (The company also opened their first Chevrolet plant overseas in 1923, in England.) (Langworth 78-81) Although the sales, service and supply components of Dallas's automotive industry were already well established, the Chevrolet Motor Company Building was only the second automobile assembly plant built in the city, following the 1914 Ford plant on Canton Street.

An article from the March 1923 issue of Dallas Magazine announced that the building was under construction and that Chevrolet had committed to a ten-year lease of the space. The article touted the building's physical characteristics, noting that, "The building will be of fireproof construction and will afford 60,000 square feet of
floor space.” It focused mostly, however, on the economic significance of the project with statements like, “The coming of the Chevrolet Company will mean the addition of about 75 families to Dallas,” and, “The coming of the Chevrolet plant is considered one of the most important additions to Dallas’s industrial history.”

The Chevrolet Motor Company Building was owned and financed by a real estate development firm. Boyd D. Milam, Edward C. Connor, and Locksley Fife were partners of the Milam, Connor and Fife Investment Corporation. Born in Paris, Tennessee, Milam moved to Dallas in 1900 and became active in real estate investments and civic affairs. (His great uncle was the Texas hero, Benjamin Milam.) Connor was a civil engineer and Fife had been an employee with Texas Fuel and Supply. The three men formed the partnership with Milam as President, Connor as Vice President, and Fife as Treasurer. Milam and Connor had also financed the construction of the 1910 Lincoln Paint and Color Company and the 1913 Interstate Forwarding Company Warehouse (NR 1992) on the same block, before taking on Fife as a partner. All three buildings are concrete and brick and share a relatively similar appearance.

The owners applied for a building permit on February 19, 1923 to build a $110,000 4-story concrete warehouse with brick curtain walls. The well-known architecture firm of Lang and Witchell designed the building and Hughes-O’Rourke Construction Co. built it. The site, adjacent to the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks, was a perfect match for the company. Access to the railroad was essential in automobile production, as the trains brought in the various parts to be assembled and also distributed the finished products. As indicated on the 1951 Sanborn Map, the railroad spur leading to the adjacent buildings was realigned to pass closer to the Chevrolet Motor Company Building. (Figure-18) The location of the railroad spur explains the building’s chamfered northwest corner, where a loading platform allowed direct access between the rail cars and the building’s interior.

Chevrolet remained in the building until 1935, and in 1936 the United States government operated a US Resettlement Administration office in the building that included Rural Resettlement Regional Office No. 8 and the District Finance Office. In 1939, the U.S. Department of Agriculture moved into the building. The agriculture department included the Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration. The United States Treasury Department had their State Accounts Section in the building as well. Texas Rural Communities, Inc. also briefly had an office in the building.

After 1940, the building was vacant until 1948, when Hesse Envelope Co., a longtime Dallas company and one of the largest envelope and file folder manufacturing plants in the southwest, moved in. They produced envelopes and file folders until 1962, when they expanded into lithography printing on envelopes, letterheads, and advertisements (Dallas Morning News 6/12/65). In 1965, they built their own plant and moved out of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building.
The Chevrolet Motor Company Building remained vacant until 1971 when the FFH Corporation moved in. They sold wholesale furniture from the building until at least 1975. The building later served as a warehouse for Dallas Secured Record Storage, but it had suffered from years of neglect when it was purchased by Westdale Properties America, a real-estate development company, in the late 1990s. Making use of the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit, the company rehabilitated the building, along with the adjacent Lincoln Paint and Color Company Building, to house apartments, and the project was completed in May 2000.

Lang and Witchell

The architectural firm of Lang and Witchell, designer of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building, was one of Dallas’s foremost design firms in the first half of the 20th century. The firm’s principles included the German-born Otto H. Lang, who had worked as a designer and structural engineer for the Texas and Pacific Railroad, and Frank O. Witchell, who’s previous employers included J. Reily Gordon and Sanguinet and Staats. After forming a partnership in 1905, Lang and Witchell designed a number of large commercial buildings in Dallas. Between 1905 and 1938, when the firm dissolved, Lang and Witchell dominated Dallas construction. They “designed or were associated with most of the significant buildings constructed in downtown Dallas.” (Quimby 1997) Although several of their buildings have been demolished, their impact on the Dallas skyline is still evident today. The firm was involved in the design of 11 of the contributing buildings in the Dallas Downtown Historic District (NR pending).

During their long and prolific career, Lang and Witchell designed buildings in a variety of styles, often at the forefront of America’s evolving architectural trends. Although a few of their earlier buildings, such as the 1908 Dallas High School (NR 1996) and the 1907 YMCA building, remained close to traditional Neo-Classical and Renaissance Revival influences, the firm soon adopted the more progressive aesthetic of Louis Sullivan and the “Chicago School.” Composed of simple, repetitive bays, but with elaborate and carefully arranged detailing, their 16-story Southwestern Life Building, built in 1911-1913, “was a Sullivanesque masterpiece of the art of skyscraper construction.” (McDonald 1978) Although the Southwestern Life Building was demolished in 1972, some of the firms Sullivanesque designs do remain, most notably the 1910 Sanger Brothers Department Store (NR 1975).

The firm’s Chicago-school influence is somewhat evident in the Chevrolet Motor Company Building’s expressed structure and repeating wide window bays. The 1923 building, however, also clearly illustrates a move toward an even simpler commercial aesthetic. The sparse ornamentation is confined to the building’s stepped parapet and includes only basic geometric shapes.

Remaining at the forefront of America’s architectural development, Lang and Witchell would go on to design a number of prominent Art Deco buildings, as that became their style of choice after 1925. (McDonald 1978) The Dallas Downtown Historic District includes three of the firm’s Art Deco skyscrapers, including the Lone...
Star Gas Building, the Southwestern Bell Building, and the Dallas Power and Light Building. Built between 1930 and 1938, those buildings illustrate the firm’s mastery of Art Deco and Moderne motifs.

Although not one of their more prominent commissions, when compared with contemporary industrial buildings in Dallas, such as the 1920 Texas Farm and Ranch Building (NR 1999) and the 1921 Dallas Tent and Awning Building (NR 1999), the especially straightforward, functional design of the Chevrolet Motor Company Building does indicate the firm’s increasingly modern aesthetic. While the Texas Farm and Ranch Building and Dallas Tent and Awning Building maintain certain historicist elements, like the cornice, the Chevrolet Motor Company Building only includes traditional features, such as column capitals, in a highly stylized fashion. Designed by a firm that cherished its progressive reputation, the Chevrolet Motor Company Building illustrates commercial architecture’s continuing move in the 1920s toward a definitively new and modern American style.

The 1923 Chevrolet Motor Company Building was built in response to the booming automotive industry of 1920s Dallas, then an important component of the city’s economic prosperity and industrial presence. Its location at the eastern edge of Deep Ellum relates both to the growth of manufacturing in that area and the nearby concentration of automotive businesses. Designed by a talented and progressive firm, the building also illustrates the increasing modernization of Commercial Style buildings in the 1920s. It is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Industry and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, both at the local level of significance.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet  

Section 9  Page 15  

Chevrolet Motor Company Building  
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas  

Bibliography  

Primary and Unpublished Sources  

City of Dallas Building Official’s Record. 1929.  

City of Dallas Building Permit Index Book. February 19, 1923.  

Dallas Magazine. “Chevrolet Plant to be Moved to Dallas.” March 1923.  
Various issues.  

“Building Permits Reach $17,462,790” 16 Dec. 1922.  
“Texas To Get Some Plants for Rubber” 18 April 1942.  
Untitled Article. Library Clipping Files. 24 February 1944.  

Dallas Times Herald. Untitled Article. Library Clipping Files. 15 June 1943  


Secondary and Published Sources  

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

“Dallas Downtown Historic District.” National Register Nomination (pending). On file with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas.

“Dallas Tent and Awning Building.” National Register Nomination. On file with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas.


*General Motors: The First 75 Years of Transportation Products.* Editors of *Automobile Quarterly Magazine*, 1983.

*Handbook of Texas Online.* Austin, Texas. Texas Historical Commission, 1999.

“Interstate Forwarding Company Warehouse.” National Register Nomination. On file with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas.


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>708220</td>
<td>3629400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**  The property includes Lots 8 and 9 of Block 848, City of Dallas, roughly bounded on the south by Commerce Street, on the west by an alley, on the north by an alley, and on the east by Trunk Street.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**  The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY  (with assistance from Peter Ketter, THC Historian)

**NAME/TITLE:** Rees T. Bowen

**ORGANIZATION:** Corgan Associates Inc.  **DATE:** 08 June 2000

**STREET & NUMBER:** 501 Elm Street, Suite 500  **TELEPHONE:** 214/748-2000

**CITY OR TOWN:** Dallas  **STATE:** TX  **ZIP CODE:** 75202

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-23)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-17 through Figure-21 and Plan-22)

PROPERTY OWNER

**NAME:** Joseph G. Beard, Westdale Properties America Inc., Ltd.

**STREET & NUMBER:** 3300 Commerce  **TELEPHONE:** 214/515-7000

**CITY OR TOWN:** Dallas  **STATE:** TX  **ZIP CODE:** 75226
1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
(Chevrolet Motor Company Building Site Indicated by Arrow)
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section  Figure  Page 18

Chevrolet Motor Company Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
(Chevrolet Motor Company Building Indicated by Arrow)
Map of Dallas’s Automotive Establishments c.1925 (arrow indicates approx. location of Chevrolet Motor Company Building)

*Simpson, “Early Dallas Automobiles”*
Lang and Witchell Rendering of Chevrolet Motor Company Building
*Dallas Magazine, March 1923*
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Chevrolet Motor Company Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Chevrolet Motor Company Building as Hesse Envelope Co. (date unknown)
Dallas Public Library, MA 84.19, Hesse Envelope Co. Collection, Box 1
Site Plan
Corgan Associates, Inc.
Photographs

Chevrolet Motor Company Building
3210 Main Street
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas
Photographed by Rees Bowen, 2000
Negative on file with Corgan Associates Inc.

Photo 1 of 6
Setting, camera facing northwest

Photo 2 of 6
Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest

Photo 3 of 6
Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast

Photo 4 of 6
North elevation and courtyard, camera facing southeast

Photo 5 of 6
East elevation and courtyard, camera facing northwest

Photo 6 of 6
Typical apartment interior
REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Chevrolet Motor Company Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Dallas

DATE RECEIVED: 3/05/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/02/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/18/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/19/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000277

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/18/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOMMENDATION: 

REVIEWER DISCIPLINE:

TELEPHONE DATE:

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N
CHEVROLET MOTOR COMPANY BUILDING
3210 MAIN STREET
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 6
CHEVROLET MOTOR COMPANY BUILDING

3210 MAIN STREET
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 OF 6
CHEVROLET MOTOR COMPANY BUILDING
3210 MAIN STREET
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 5 of 6