

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See Instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Continental Gin Company, Dallas plant

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 3301-3333 Elm Street, 212 & 232 Trunk Ave.

N/A not for publication

city, town Dallas

N/A vicinity of

state Texas

code 048

county Dallas

code 113

3. Classification

Category

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

Ownership

☐ public☒ private☐ both

Public Acquisition

☐ N/A in process☐ being considered

Status

☒ occupied☒ unoccupied☐ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted☐ yes: unrestricted☐ no

Present Use

☐ agriculture☒ commercial☐ educational☐ entertainment☐ government☒ industrial☐ military☐ museum☐ park☐ private residence☐ religious☐ scientific☐ transportation☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership - see Continuation Sheet

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dallas County Courthouse

street & number

Records Building

city, town

Dallas

state

Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date January 1983

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town

Austin

state

Texas

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date

N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Continental Gin Company buildings are of interest as a substantial and intact example of industrial architecture around the turn of the century. The complex is an unusual survival in Dallas and North Texas, and ranges from vernacular masonry buildings with ornamental corbeled cornices, built in 1888, to glass-front, industrial structures with Flemish-bond brickwork and almost Palladian symmetry, built in 1914. While a small part of the complex built by the Continental Gin was razed at an early date, the surviving structures show relatively little modification. The integrity of the site is essentially undisturbed.

The Continental Gin Company became famous for its production of advanced cotton gin and other equipment, and created a complex of industrial structures built in three phases. The first phase, in 1888, saw the construction of a three-story main building at 3309 Pacific Avenue, which was used as a warehouse in later days. A smaller, two-story structure was also built that year, at 232 Trunk Avenue. These buildings have flat roofs and are constructed of load-bearing brick masonry and heavy timbers. Their simple design is characterized by corbeled cornices, windows with operable wooden sashes and four-over-four lights, occasional loading bays with segmental arches, and by an exterior of tan-red brick with "star bosses." The warehouse has a single, central line of timber columns each bearing two 30-ft. spans and 3- by 14-in. joists. The floors are covered by 1- by 2-in. hardwood boards laid diagonally. It appears that this warehouse was gradually enlarged over a 12-year period by adding 100-ft. increments to the east facade of the original building. The structure is in sound condition. Interiors are primarily utilitarian.

In 1912, the second major phase of building took place. In that year a new foundry was constructed on the west side of the property, at 212 Trunk Avenue. It consists of a long, central space with steeply-pitched roof and gable ends, bordered by parallel wings covered by sloping shed roofs. The original metal roof has been replaced, and it is thought that it once carried numerous shed-roof gables and ridgeline ventilators. The foundry is built of load-bearing masonry along with steel beams and trusses. Although modified somewhat on the interior, the building's exterior retains most of its window and door openings with segmental arches, as well as the original steel-sash casements. The overall design is restrained and functional, while the front elevation shows some fancy detailing, with both brick pilasters and corbeled roof lines. The structural condition of the foundry is fair, although a moderate amount of exterior deterioration and modification has occurred.

The third, and final, phase of building took place in 1914, with the construction of a handsome new factory and office complex on Elm Street, facing the south. Included are a main factory building (3311 Elm), a pattern shop (3301 Elm), a rather fancy office building (3333 Elm), and a power house located behind the offices. These new buildings were somewhat formal, and helped to define the new image of the company at its front door, so to speak. They are two- and three-story, flat-roofed buildings constructed of steel-reinforced concrete with "mushroom" columns and two-way slabs. The exterior fill of the wall is dark-red brick and operable, steel-sash windows. The present condition of these structures is quite good.

United States Department of the Interior
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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

At the time of these additions in 1914, industrial construction in the U. S. was changing. There was a move away from the use of load-bearing masonry and timbers toward the employment of reinforced concrete, cast in place, and brick infill. Evidence of this shift in technique is one of the most significant architectural features of the Continental Gin complex, for it helps delineate the change from one architectural era to another. Perhaps because these new structures also served as the corporate headquarters, as well as a manufacturing space, the company felt a need to apply formality in the design. A Palladian style and balance for their new front on Elm Street was the final result. The main factory building at 3311 Elm is three-stories high and the middle section of its three-part facade can be viewed, so to speak, as the central, recessed portion of a Palladian main hall (cf. Sutton Scarsdale, Derbyshire). The front of the factory structure is composed of a central, recessed plane of five bays with forward, or advanced, planes of three bays to each side. The factory exhibits decorative, concrete pilasters which imitate stone, and the floors are not equidistant. Rather, there is a classical sense of proportions in the uneven horizontal and vertical spacing. For present purposes it is useful to view the factory as a classical column. The "base" is defined by rusticated pavilion pilasters on the two lateral segments or wings, and by a stringcourse of molding at the top of the first-floor level. The second and third stories make up the "body" and are unmarked. The "head" of this imaginary column is a deep, cast-stone cornice below the parapet; there are also decorative, voiseau-like patterns over the windows, mimicking arches. The brickwork, interestingly, is Flemish bond. The windows of the building are of the multiple-pane type with steel casements, except in the case of the central bays of the first floor, where large plate-glass panes are found.

To the east and west of the factory building are located separate, smaller structures. If the Palladian analogy is continued, then these buildings can be seen as the side pavilions to the main block. To the east, at 3333 Elm Street, stands the office building. This structure is more detailed than the main factory. The Elm Street facade is a five-bay front in the pattern AA-B-AA. It shows concrete pilasters with distinct bases and capitals, wooden-sash windows with six lights, and a wooden transom with six upright panes. At the entrance (B bay) there is an elaborate entablature and a pediment over the door. The pattern shop, at the opposite end of the factory, at 3301 Elm Street, is the other wing, or aisle. It is similar in size to the office building, but lacks the same detailing. The simpler treatment of the facade and the fenestration are identical to that of the five central bays of the factory building. Both the pattern shop and the office building are linked to the factory structure by second-story, concrete hyphens.

Behind the office building sits the old power plant, which is remarkable in the degree to which it is decorated. Each facade is divided into bays by pilasters with distinct bases and capitals. There is also a markedly protruding stringcourse, or cornice, below the parapet. Between the adjacent corner pilasters occur rusticated, decorative quoins of cast stone. The outermost bays show inset, brick-filled false window spaces capped by large cast-stone lintels. Above each window space is a seg-

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

mental arch of brick with a prominent cast-stone keystone and fan lights. The central bays are much plainer, and contain pairs of industrial, steel-casement windows like those of the pattern shop. Several of the arches and windows have been bricked in at some unknown date. The attached masonry smokestack, which once proudly bore the company logo, has been razed. A steel water tower stands on the north side of the complex. Though damaged, it continues to be a local landmark easily visible from the surrounding neighborhoods and the freeways. A two-level steel bridge connects the old warehouse and the factory building. Other wooden and masonry structures once existed on the property but were razed, mainly to be replaced in 1914 by the concrete and brick building on Elm Street. At about this time the gin company also used several wooden sheds on adjacent land to the northeast of the current tract, but they have been demolished. As the complex grew, the neighboring tracts gradually turned from residential to commercial use. Most of the commercial buildings of the neighborhood remain today.

The buildings of the Continental Gin Company reflect two generations of construction technology, as well as the growth and development of the company itself. The complex contains several of the best examples of late 19th- and early 20th-century industrial architecture which remain in the Dallas area. The wedding of industrial utility with classicism is evident in the style of the additions made in 1914, as is the designer's homage to the mason's art. The result is an alliance of function, style, and craftsmanship not commonly seen in the industrial design of that era. All extant buildings in the Continental Gin complex should be considered as making a positive contribution.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☐ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800-1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☒ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☒ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1888-1914

Builder/Architect

D. L. Stevenson (1912),

Buchannon and Guessler (1914)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Cotton was a mainstay of the economy of Dallas and East Texas for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the buildings of the Continental Gin Company are one of the most visible reminders of that pivotal industry to be found in the state. Continent Gin grew to be one of the largest and most innovative concerns of its type in the country. This development took place under the able leadership of Robert S. Munger and his brother Stephen I., who are also known for their philanthropic enterprises and real estate venture. The Continental Gin complex is also significant as an unusual and intact survival in Texas of turn-of-the-century heavy industrial architecture. There were relatively few such manufacturing sites in North Texas, and most of those have been abandoned, substantially altered, or removed altogether. The old buildings of the Continental Gin Company., however, remain substantially as completed in 1914.

Robert S. Munger was born in Rutersville, Texas, on July 24, 1854. Working with cotton as a boy in Mexia, Texas, he developed an improved type of cotton gin. After receiving patents on his innovations, Mr. Munger established at Dallas, in 1884, a small plant for the manufacture of the Munger Ginning System. Capital support to expand production was provided by the prominent Dallas banker, W. H. Caston, and the Munger Improved Cotton Machine Manufacturing Co. was organized. Until 1899, Munger's sales were the largest of any single manufacturer in the West. With increasing demand for his products east of the Mississippi, S. I. Munger took over the plant in Dallas during his absence. According to a descendant, Robert Munger's contributions to the family enterprise were primarily as an inventor, while his brother Stephen was known for his business acumen.

The Continental Gin Company was created in October of 1899 by a merger of the Munger companies in Dallas and Birmingham; the Daniel Pratt Gin Co. of Prattville, Alabama; the Winship Machine Co. of Atlanta, Georgia; and the Eagle Cotton Gin Company of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The Continental Gin Company soon became the largest manufacturer of cotton gins in the United States with a large export business to South America, South Africa, and Russia.

The various structures which comprised the Dallas part of the company are situated in the block bounded by Trunk Avenue, Elm Street, and Pacific Street. The site is just east of the central business district. Located to the north of the plant is the Munger Place residential development which at one time attracted many of Dallas' monied citizens. This development is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Dallas office of the company was responsible for accepting all the western sales orders and distributing them to the factories. The Dallas plant also housed one of the two demonstration facilities which the company used.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Not much is known about several of the original buildings which were razed and replaced long ago, because the relative city records dating before 1900 have been destroyed. It is known, however, that the 1912 foundry at 212 Trunk Avenue was built by D. L. Stevenson of Nettleson Contractors, Inc., and that the foundry cost some \$16,000. In the fall of 1913, \$250,000 were appropriated for the new buildings on Elm Street, which were put up the following year. They were constructed by Buchannon and Guessler of Dallas, but the architect's name is not preserved.

The Continental Gin Company was a booming industry in the early 1920s, and received honorable recognition during the 1940s for its aid in the war effort. The company still exists today, and is located in Prattville, Alabama. The foundry at 212 Trunk Avenue was sold in 1962 to Al-Mar Investments. The remaining parts of the gin company were bought by Coerver Properties in 1964 and 1966, who manufactured cabinets and elevator cars in the Elm Street buildings. A development company called Continental Gin Properties, Ltd. (not related to the original gin manufacturing company), now owns the old foundry, the warehouse, and some of the Elm Street structures. The office building and power plant on Elm are owned by Sockwell-Freeman Enterprises.

R. S. Munger not only innovated the cotton gin industry, but also contributed to the development of the city of Dallas. While in Birmingham, Munger observed restricted residential districts and decided in 1900 to devise such a district for Dallas. Munger Place, located north of the Continental Gin Company, was opened in 1905 as Dallas third subdivision, and first deed-restricted subdivision. R. S. Munger was likewise influential in the development of the Lakewood Country Club, an institution in Dallas since 1913. Also, because of the exclusiveness of the entire Munger Place Development (including the Swiss Avenue Historic District), R. S. Munger managed to attract many citizens of Dallas who were prominent in political, social, and money circles.

His brother, S. I. Munger, was also a prominent citizen of Dallas. He was a director of several banks in Dallas and served as president of the Continental Gin Company from 1903 till his death in 1921. After his brother's death, R. S. Munger served as president of the company till he died in 1923.

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9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Smith, Algernon L., 1952. Story of the Continental Gin Company. Privately printed, Birmingham, Alabama.
 Dallas County Deed Records
 City of Dallas Munger Place Nomination Report
 Gertrude Aldredge Shelburne to Peter Flagg Maxon, telephone interview, 12-8-1982

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3.424 Acres

Quadrangle name Dallas, Tex.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 14 708200 31629570
 Zone Easting Northing

B
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

City of Dallas Block 833 bounded by Elm Street, Trunk Avenue, and Tex. and Pac. RR.
 Outline of property shown in enclosed map and aerial photograph.

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	Carolynne Chancellor/Researcher	John C. Tatum Jr./Developer
organization	Continental Gin Properties, Ltd.	date May 17, 1982
street & number		telephone 214-698-0298
city or town	Dallas	state Texas 75202

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 3 Jan. 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration