

Inventory Number 173-5880-0026

REGISTER OF HISTORIC KANSAS PLACES--COVER SHEET

Name of Property Building Number Nine

Location 801 East 37th Street North
(street and number)

Wichita
(city, town, or vicinity location)

U-259-1-W10 Beg. 500' W NE cor NW $\frac{1}{4}$ W 255' S to S li NW $\frac{1}{4}$ E 516.3'
N 208.7' E 108.7' N 1437.77' W 470' N 1035' to beg sec 33-26-1E
(legal description)

Sedgwick
(County)

Owner of Property Coleman Company, Inc.

250 N. St. Francis
(street and number)

Wichita, Sedgwick County
(city, town, county)

National Register Status:

date approved for nomination to the National Register by Kansas Historic
Sites Board of Review August 27, 1988

date entered in National Register _____

Description: See attached sheets.

#7

Building Nine (c. 1887) is located in the middle of a complex of buildings at Coleman's North manufacturing plant in Wichita, Kansas. The one story, sawtooth roofed building stands on a stone foundation and measures approximately eighty-one feet by two hundred and forty-nine feet with the main axis in the north/south direction. The building appears to be structurally sound and has grown with additions along the east and south elevations. The building is part of a production line for refrigeration equipment.

The original building is constructed with stone footings, soft dressed-brick masonry bearing walls, and a ten-element sawtooth wood roof that carries the clerestories across the narrow portion of the building. The original floor consisted of wood blocks set vertically on the soil. The west facade and east elevation were probably identical, with the sawtooth elements adding a rhythm to the building.

Each sawtooth element is approximately twenty-three feet long and twenty-three feet wide to the top of the peak. Each element contains two embedded columns approximately fourteen feet high and two feet wide. Two, nine foot, six inches by five foot windows comprise the rest of the sawtooth elements. The original windows were probably double hung wooden sashes. The original roofing material was probably sawn wood shingles with a wood fascia board at the wall line. The original interior structure is framed by a heavy, through-bolted beam composed of eight, two by twelves running east/west at each end of the sawtoothed elements. These beams were supported by wood columns at three points. Wood framing sprung from these wood beams forms the roof and clerestories.

Presently the building retains some of its original character on the west facade and the interior. The stone footings are still in place. To save the soft pressed-brick masonry walls, a sand textured stucco was applied to both the interior and exterior brick. The clerestory glass has been infilled with wood siding. The wood roof has been shingled over with asphalt shingles and the fascia is now sheet metal flashing. The present metal windows date from the 1920s. The metal windows contain three columns and seven rows of glass panels, with the top, fourth, and bottom rows fixed. Each of the other two pairs of rows (second and third from the top, and fifth and sixth from the top) are operable awning windows. The original window location has not been altered. On the interior, the original flooring has been covered by several layers of concrete floors. The wood columns have been replaced by steel, and the clerestories infilled. The character of the wide open interior manufacturing space is intact.

Several additions have been added on to the east and south side of the building. These contain concrete block walls with a steel bar joist structure with a metal deck and built-up roofing. All of the existing window openings on the east have been infilled.

Building Nine is surrounded by old and new structures. The main access drive through the complex is just to the west of the building. Areas just to the north and south of the building are used for pallet storage and block much of the view of the building from these directions. Vehicular access is limited to the east.

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Building Nine (c. 1887) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion A for its historical association with a number of important local and national companies. Several of these have contributed much to making Wichita "The Air Capital of the World." This building was originally part of the Burton Stock Car Company complex, it is now part of one of the Coleman Company's largest factories of heating and air conditioning equipment.

The first account of the building is found in the Wichita Eagle, 25 August 1887: "The foundations are being rapidly excavated. A switch from the Midland is being put down and stone is being delivered by the carload." Just two months later the Burton Stock Car Company occupied the building. Wichita was then a thriving city of over 40,000 citizens. The north part of Wichita was served by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, the St. Louis and San Francisco, and the Missouri Pacific railroad lines. The plant was connected to all of these lines, and blossomed immediately. By March of 1888 the company had a backlog of 8,000 cars on order. The company's 1888 capital investment of \$1,000,000 was quite substantial. In 1890, 160 men were on Burton's payroll. The depression of the 1890s ended the demand for rail cars and was the undoing of the Burton Car Company.

In 1906, the American Warehouse Company owned and operated from the series of buildings of which Building Nine was a part. Little information remains about the American Warehouse Company except that in its time it was the largest broom corn warehouse in the world.

Old timers tell about a wonderful party that was held in one of the big buildings. It was held just before the new crop came in, the remaining bales of broom corn were pushed to the sides, the floor was

swept clean for dancing, and Coleman lamps were hung from the rafters. Of course there weren't any cars then, only horse drawn buggies and wagons and the railroad. The fact that there was a railroad track along side the building where the dance was to be held gave the hosts an idea. They chartered a train, loaded the guests into the train and carried them to the dance in grand style. - Wichita Eagle,
 15 August 1964.

In 1915 John J. Jones (J.J. Jones) bought the American Warehouse property and moved in his "Standardized Car" assembly plant. Jones called his car the "Jones Six" because of an innovative six cylinder engine developed from the principal that more cylinders would provide smoother power. The "Jones Six" was known for it's paint scheme, soundness, and mechanical quality. The car did not change in the five years that it was produced. It was one of the first cars which would do sixty miles per hour. The Jones Motor Company produced four passenger models and two trucks. The body designs were among the first to use streamlining and became so popular that the company established agencies all over the world. World War I and the recession of 1921 hurt the company. Prices soared on even the smallest parts. Motors were being shipped only one or two at a time. As the war progressed, parts became impossible to get and the company closed it's doors sometime in 1921. Some 3,000 cars had been manufactured and sold.

In 1916, Clyde Cessna somehow found space in a corner of the Jones Plant to work on a crude aircraft. Eventually the fabric covered mono-plane took to the air successfully and Clyde Cessna was on his way. Jones even laid a cement circle in the fields adjacent to his plant and thus became

Wichita's first airport. "It was Jones who talked Clyde Cessna into building airplanes in Wichita and when Jones stopped making cars, Cessna moved into the plant and began making a mono-plane which was powered by a six cylinder aircooled engine and called "The Comet"." Clyde Cessna survived the war and recession to establish the Cessna Aircraft Company. Cessna is the largest general aviation company in the world. The company has delivered over 176,500 aircraft and more than half of the aircraft flying in the free world today.

In 1927 the Bridgeport Machine Company moved it's operation into the complex. The Machine Works originated in Bridgeport, Illinois in 1907 and supplied and rented heavy machinery and equipment to the oilwell industry. An adjacent community was established for the workers including a school and church. The company was quite an important industry for Wichita in this period, generating significance revenue to the community and employing a large number of people. An interesting architectural feature was a massive neon sign that the company installed on top of the factory. It was the tenth largest of its kind in the U.S., Claude Neon Federal of Wichita was the builder of the one hundred and sixty foot by sixty foot sign. The sign contained a twenty-seven foot high buffalo trademark and had an illuminted surface of 3,146 square feet. The sign could be seen for miles.

Nineteen hundred and twenty-nine saw the humble beginnings of another industrial giant. "Lloyd Stearman, a Kansas boy who had moved to California was persuaded to bring his factory to Wichita and began making airplanes in the buildings that had been used by Clyde Cessna." The Tearman Aircraft Company was the forerunner of the Boeing Military Airplane Company (BMAC). BMAC is now the state's largest private employer and makes up the largest private single site aerospace complex in the free world.

In 1934 the Rotary Farm Equipment Company occupied the building. Not much is known about the short-lived company except that it manufactured farm equipment.

In 1940 during the early part of World War II, The Culver Company briefly occupied the building. The company provided midget electronically controlled aircraft to be used as flying targets for ground gun crews.

In 1947 The Coleman Company bought the buildings and grounds from the Culver Company. For several years Coleman produced parts for the Boeing B-47 Bomber (5) but after the Korean War it manufactured chiefly home heating equipment. Today Building Nine stands as part of an assembly line for making Coleman heating and air conditioning systems. Coleman is not only a major Wichita and Kansas company but the largest manufacturer of camping gear in the nation, and a major supplier of leisure and recreational products.

Building Nine has been considerably altered over the years. It maintains its overall sawtooth roof form but the brick walls have been stuccoed, the clerestories and some windows have been filled in, the wooden floor has been concreted over, and additions mark the east and south elevations. All other extant structures associated with the Burton Stock Car Company and the succeeding companies have also been altered in a similar fashion. While its National Register eligibility is being justified for its historical associations with the Burton Stock Car Company, the American Warehouse Company, the Jones Motor Company, the Bridgeport Machine Company, and the Tearman Aircraft Company, its architectural integrity is still a matter of concern. The building is certainly important for its historical associations with the industrial history of Wichita but alterations to the building may impact its integrity enough to disqualify the building from National Register listing.