

**Dallas Landmark Commission  
Landmark Nomination Form**

**1. Name**

historic: Dallas Tent and Awning  
and/or common: Murray Company date: 1921

**2. Location**

address: 3401 Commerce  
location/neighborhood: Deep Ellum  
block: 830 lot: 23, 24, 25, 26 land survey: Gaston tract size:

**3. Current Zoning**

**4. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other, specify
				<input type="checkbox"/> vacant

**5. Ownership**

Current Owner: Maincom properties/Pan American Capital Corp.  
Contact: John Miller Phone: 748-8466  
Address: 3200 Main Ste. 1.3 City: Dallas State: TX Zip: 75226

**6. Form Preparation**

Date: Dec. 23, 1994  
Name & Title: Kate Singleton  
Organization:  
Contact: Phone: 821-7533

**7. Representation on Existing Surveys**

Alexander Survey (citywide)  local  state  national  National Register  
H.P.L. Survey (CBD)  A  B  C  D  Recorded TX Historic Ldmk  
Oak Cliff   TX Archaeological Ldmk  
Victorian Survey   
Dallas Historic Resources Survey, Phase   high  medium  low

*For Office Use Only*

Date Rec'd: \_\_\_\_\_ Survey Verified: Y N by: \_\_\_\_\_ Field Check by: \_\_\_\_\_ Petitions Needed: Y N

Nomination:      Archaeological      Site      Structure(s)      Structure & Site      District

### 8. Historic Ownership

original owner: Dallas Tent and Awning  
significant later owner(s): Murray Company

### 9. Construction Dates

original: 1921  
alterations/additions: ca. 1950, 1960

### 10. Architect

original construction: n/a  
alterations/additions:

### 11. Site Features

natural:  
urban design:

### 12. Physical Description

Condition, check one:

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

unaltered  
 altered

Check one:

original site  
 moved(date \_\_\_\_\_)

*Describe present and original (if known) physical appearance. Include style(s) of architecture, current condition and relationship to surrounding fabric (structures, objects, etc). elaborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments and site details.*

The Dallas Tent and Awning Building, 3401 Commerce, was constructed in 1921 and opened for business in January of 1922. This building was "the largest Tent and Awning Plant in the South" according to Dallas Magazine. (Dallas Magazine, March 1922, p.10) The building, used continually for manufacturing, was also owned by the world-famous Murray Company, manufacturers of industrial equipment. Stylistically, the reflects its industrial use. It is a handsome Commercial style building with simple ornamentation reminiscent of the Chicago School of commercial architecture.

Although this building is smaller than the typical Chicago School commercial buildings, it does share some of the same characteristics. The Chicago School was a result of strides made in construction technology. Building height had before been limited by the massiveness of masonry walls. The invention of skeleton frame made taller buildings practical. This also helped to improve fireproofing and foundation technology. This building stylistically echoes the Chicago School with its shape, flat roof and minimal ornamentation. The building also has horizontally symmetrical windows on the upper stories and large display windows on the ground floor. These are also characteristics of the Chicago School.

The building permit for this building was taken out on December 28, 1920. It was described as a three story brick veneer factory. The cost in the Dallas Magazine article is given as \$75,000. (Dallas Magazine, March 1922, p.10) The building is a red-brown brick veneer with cast stone accents and a metal cornice.

The front facade faces Commerce Street. There are four bays across the first story. These bays each have transom windows above them. The transom lights are evenly divided into six lights. The first bay, at the corner of Commerce and Second Streets, has a double entrance door with display windows on either side. The display windows at each bay have cast stone sills. The second bay has three display windows. The

### 13. Historical Significance

*Statement of historical and cultural significance. Include: cultural influences, special events and important personages, influences on neighborhood, on the city, etc.*

The Dallas Tent and Awning Building, 3401 Commerce, was constructed in 1921 and was opened in January 1922. This building was "the largest Tent and Awning Plant in the South". (Dallas Magazine, March 1922, p.10) It was home of one of the largest businesses of this kind in the Southwest. The building was subsequently owned by the world-famous Murray Company, manufacturers of industrial equipment including cotton gins and oil field equipment.

Emil Ducourt, founder of the company, came to Dallas in 1878 from France. He was not part of La Reunion which had disappeared by 1865. Ducourt came with his wife, Mary, and their three children, George, Joe and Mary. According to the 1880 U.S. Census, Ducourt was an upholsterer. He set up business as a mattress manufacturer and upholsterer at what is now 2642 Elm. The business moved to two other locations on Elm Street. By 1883, just five years after his arrival, Ducourt was running more elaborate ads in the Dallas city directories. Included in his services were custom awnings. Live geese feathers were kept in stock for renovation of mattresses.

In 1884, the Ducourts ran a large ad advertising all kinds of bedding and upholstering made to order in any style. Despite the success of his business, Ducourt, a hard drinking Catholic, committed suicide. He was only 35 years old. His wife Mary was left not only to raise the children but run the business.

In a time when women-owned businesses were a rarity, Mary Ducourt took over her husband's business and made it very successful. In 1887, Mary Ducourt was cited in a small promotional pamphlet called, "Industries of Dallas: Her Relations as a Center of Trade". The following description provides information about her business:

"Mrs. E. Ducourt-Manufacturer of Mattresses and Awnings and Renovator of Feathers; 727 Elm Street.---Mrs. Ducourt continues the business run by her husband in his lifetime, and is doing well. She supplies dealers in McKinney, Terrell, Ennis and all the small towns of North Texas, and is the main source of supply for the retailers of Dallas. The specialties of her establishment are the manufacture of mattresses and awnings and the renovation of feathers. She is the only manufacturer of awnings here, and has the only feather renovator in Dallas. She carries in stock a line of mattresses, duck and awning goods, and is prepared to accommodate the trade in these lines. Correspondence solicited and promptly attended to."

By 1933, the Anchor Awning Company, including Dallas Tent and Awning, had been sold to Carroll B. Grant. Grant hired James A. Sommerville as president. In 1936, Dallas Tent and Awning ran a new ad featuring venetian blinds and listing J.C. Austin as the General Manager. Mr. Grant continued to own the company through World War II. They had moved out of 3401 Commerce by 1939. Anchor and Dallas Tent and Awning were consolidated and the factory was moved to Gaston Avenue. The company went into receivership soon after the war.

The company had several well-known customers. The commercial accounts included all the large downtown stores including: Neiman-Marcus, Dreyfus and Sons, Titcher-Goettinger, James K. Wilson and Harris' (later Sanger-Harris). Residential accounts included Mrs. Marcus, Mrs. James K. Wilson and Mrs. Stewart (Stewart Office Supplies). According to one story, Mrs. James K. Wilson was particularly thrifty and would make her yardman take her canvas canopy down to see if it would last just one more year.

The company made canvas lawn furniture and also recovered umbrellas. They were the first company to handle polyfoam using it to make glider cushions. Dallas Tent and Awning was the only company to use the triple needle for three rows of stitching; a method which became their trademark.

In the early 1940's the building was vacant. By 1945, Machinery Sales and Supply Company was listed at 3405 Commerce. The company was run by Tom W. Patton with Hazen T. Smith and Roy Whitlock as vice-presidents. In later years the building was occupied by the Murray Company.

The Murray Company was one of the largest manufacturers of cotton gin machinery in the world. The company was founded in 1900 when it took over a small gin manufacturing plant in East Dallas. The company had plants in Dallas, Atlanta and Bridgewater and Quincy, Massachusetts. The Murray Company maintained a staff of research engineers to develop and manufacture its own machinery and equipment.

Among the contributions the Murray Company has made have been an all-steel, highspeed airblast gin; the Murray elevating system; an all-steel, selfcleaning, fireproof condenser; an improved airline cleaner, and the Hancock Cotton Picker. The company was the first one to perfect a machine for cleaning cotton at the gin and first to build a gin to run at 700 revolutions a minute with a loose roll.

This building, like the Texas Farm and Ranch Publishing Building, was constructed when this area of Deep Ellum near Fair Park was still in transition. The area was moving from a poor residential and commercial area to a manufacturing and wholesale district. As is well documented, the area known as Deep Ellum was a Freedman's town. However, this part of Deep Ellum, near Fair Park and the railroad tracks, had both black and white residences who often lived next door to each other in small wood frame houses. By the 1930's this area had made the transition to a manufacturing and wholesale district.

Dallas during this time period was experiencing a great deal of growth. The city had become a major manufacturing and wholesale market. The major railroads linked Dallas with other major centers. Agriculture, especially cotton, banking and insurance were the major industries in Dallas. The city had excellent shipping and financial facilities for the marketing of cotton. The discovery of oil in East Texas brought Dallas into further prominence as the closest large city to the fields. Newspaper coverage was given to oil activity in the region and to Dallas' importance as the nearest commercial and trade center. The Chamber of Commerce began a massive country-wide promotion of Dallas in 1929. They spent \$500,000 to advertise the city as the center for cotton and oil with an excellent labor force and ample transportation.

This prosperity of the 1920's was reflected in this new \$75,000 plant which was considered the largest of its kind when constructed in 1921. Dallas Tent and Awning was thriving during this period and was part of the phenomenal growth that the city of Dallas experienced during this time. The building stands as a reminder of that period of growth and two businesses which were a part of that growth.

## Designation Merit

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>A. Character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Dallas, State of Texas or the United States. _____</p> | <p>G. Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city. _____</p>  |
| <p>B. Location as the site of a significant historical event. _____</p>   | <p>H. Embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, material or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation. _____</p>                               |
| <p>C. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city. _____</p>   | <p>I. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on historic, cultural or architectural motif. _____</p> |
| <p>D. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social or historical heritage of the city. _____</p>   | <p>J. Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar feature of a neighborhood, community or the city. _____</p>                         |
| <p>E. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style. _____</p>                                | <p>K. Archaeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories or historic or prehistoric value. _____</p>                                    |
| <p>F. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or specimen. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _____</p>                                   | <p>L. Value as an aspect of community sentiment of public pride. _____</p>  |

## Recommendation

The Designation Task Force requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.

Further, the Designation Task Force endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Planning and Development.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair  
Designation Task Force

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Anderson, Urban Planner  
Historic Preservation