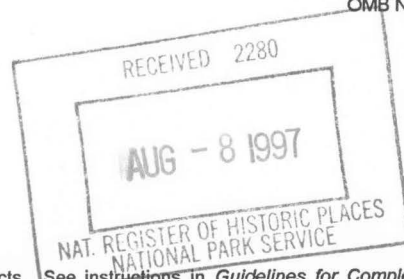


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1096

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate space or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Graybar Electric Company Building

other name / site number Board of Education Department of Audio-Visual Service Building

2. Location

street & number 55 West Canfield

city or town Detroit

state Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163 zip code 48201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet.)

John R. Halsey
Signature of certifying official / Title

7-30-97
Date

Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

9/22/97
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public - local
 public - State
 public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

(Check only one box)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Cass Farm Survey Area

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE / warehouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)EDUCATION / education related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER / reinforced concrete warehouse

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: BRICK, CONCRETE
roof: COMPOSITION
other: N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe present and historic physical appearance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Graybar Electric Company Building is a large three story, brick and concrete, industrial style building with reinforced concrete frame located on the south side of West Canfield in Detroit, Michigan. The asymmetrical brick facade, featuring pilasters, a stone string course and cast stone details, turns the corner on the east side and covers the first bay. The side and rear elevations are utilitarian in design.

The three story Graybar Electric Company Building was originally constructed as offices and stores. Its design is industrial in nature: the front of the brick building serves as an architecturally pleasing front piece to an otherwise utilitarian structure, as evidenced on the side and rear elevations. The symmetrical facade is divided vertically by buttress piers which originate at a stylized, denticulated string course between the first and second stories. The buttress piers then rise through the upper two stories, terminating below a stepped parapet wall. The tops of the buttress piers and the parapet wall are of cast stone. The simple, classically framed entrance is off center; to its right are three garage door openings. The window configuration on the upper two stories, from east to west along West Canfield, is 2-3-3-3-2. The windows are grouped between pilasters. Above each side bay on the front facade is a cast stone panel bearing a shield. A blind rectangular panel occupies the area below the central rise of the parapet wall.

The east elevation contains large banks of industrial steel sash with reinforced concrete framing. The reinforced concrete frame of the west elevation is filled in with brick. A steel water tower with an elliptical bottom tank is located on top of this building and is a neighborhood landmark.

West Canfield lies to the north of the building; vacant land and Canfield's Restaurant at 4255-65 Woodward lie to the east of the building; the Detroit-Edison Steam Power Plant is south of the building; and the James Vernor Co. Building at 77 West Canfield is to the west.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #:
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #:

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1926 - 1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect / Builder

C.F. Haglin & Sons, contractor

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 1

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The warehouse building at 55 West Canfield is historically significant as it was originally occupied by the Graybar Electric Company, the nation's largest independent electrical and telecommunications distributor, from 1926 into the 1940s. Elisha Gray, a physics professor and inventor of telegraphic equipment, and Enos Barton, an employee of a large telegraph company in Rochester, New York, founded the company in 1869 in Cleveland, Ohio. The business continually grew from a small business with the goal of bringing new communications equipment to public use in the late 1800s into an enormous distribution company, which by 1926 had fifty-nine distributing houses in important cities across the nation, including Detroit, Michigan. The Graybar Electric Company was also a pioneer in business practices, as they were the first large business purchased by their employees in 1929. The company has continued to expand and remains a successful company today. The Graybar Electric Company Building contributes to the Multiple Resource Nomination of the Cass Farm Survey Area within the context of Commerce.

The Graybar Electrical Company had its beginnings with \$400 acquired from mortgaging a small farm in Jefferson County, New York. A partnership between Enos Barton, an entrepreneur, and George Shawk, the company was originally located in Cleveland. In 1869, Elisha Gray, a professor of physics at Oberlin College and an inventor of telegraphic equipment, bought out Shawk's interest in the company. Gray and Barton each invested \$2,500.

The company was instantly successful and soon attracted the attention of General Anson Stager, General Superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph Company. The three men became equal partners in the business and Gray and Barton's company moved from Cleveland to Chicago in 1869. In 1872 the business was incorporated as the Western Electric Manufacturing Company.

The business began to gain status as a large company following the invention of the telephone in 1875 and the lamp in 1879 as these inventions broadened the applications of electricity and electrical manufacturing. The firm sold products they originally manufactured, including electric bells and batteries, telegraph keys, fire alarm boxes and hotel annunciators, as well as many items which it purchased from other manufacturers. As the demand for the telephone continued to rise, Western Electric became increasingly more involved in the manufacture of telephones and telephone apparatus and later became the world's greatest producer of telephone equipment.

As the country's industries grew with the invention of the airplane and automobile at the turn of the century, the Western Electric Company kept pace with the continued expansion of their distribution activities, primarily handling an extensive line of electrical supplies. A chain of warehouses were established across the nation, and the distributing business continued to grow as scores of reputable, "big name" manufacturers were using the company's distribution network. By 1926, the company had become enormous and a separate entity had to be established for handling the distribution of electrical supplies and equipment. This new entity was named Graybar, in honor of the company's founders, and became the country's leading wholesaler of electrical supplies and equipment. In 1926, the Graybar Electric Company, capitalized at \$9,000,000, consisted of 59 distributing houses in important cities across the nation. The building on West Canfield, Detroit was one such distribution house.

The Graybar Electric Company Building was rented to the Graybar Electric Company by the contracting firm of C.F. Haglin & Sons. Detroit Building Permit #10523 was issued to the contracting firm for the construction of the building on June 14, 1926. The estimated cost of construction was \$120,000. The Graybar Electric Company rented the building from the contracting firm and occupied the building well into the 1940s. The building today serves as the Audio-Visual Department of the Detroit Board of Education.

United States Department of the Interior
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 2

The creation of Graybar made business history. It was the first time a major corporation had reverted to its original designation as the basis for its corporate name. Three years later, in 1929, another and even greater business first was achieved. Graybar employees purchased the company. It was the first time ever that a company of such size became the property of its employees. Nearly all of Graybar's 2,300 employees bought their allotted shares of stock.

This purchase occurred only a short time before the crash of 1929. However, the company never missed paying a common dividend even though business volume during the depth of the depression shrank to one-third of the \$85,371,000 it had reached in 1929, the first year of employee-ownership.

Graybar continued to grow during the thirties, with the merchandising of new products, in the war years of the forties through supplying war-needed goods. Today, annual sales have climbed to an all-time high, the number of distribution centers now totals 200, and the number of employees is close to 5,000.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Detroit Building Permit #10523, June 14, 1926.

Graybar. "The Graybar Story." Auburn Hills: n.d.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	330120	4690740	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared by

Gretchen Griner, Associate

name/title

Zachary and Associates, Inc.

organization

February 1997

date

422 West Congress, Suite 320

street & number

(313) 963-1410

telephone

Detroit

city or town

Michigan

state

48226

zip code

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Board of Education, A-312

name

(313) 494-1000

street & number

telephone

Detroit

MI

48226

city or town

state

zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

B & A
SE CANFIELD
7 49
JONES JAMES A. RESUB
2/44 90 IRREG.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

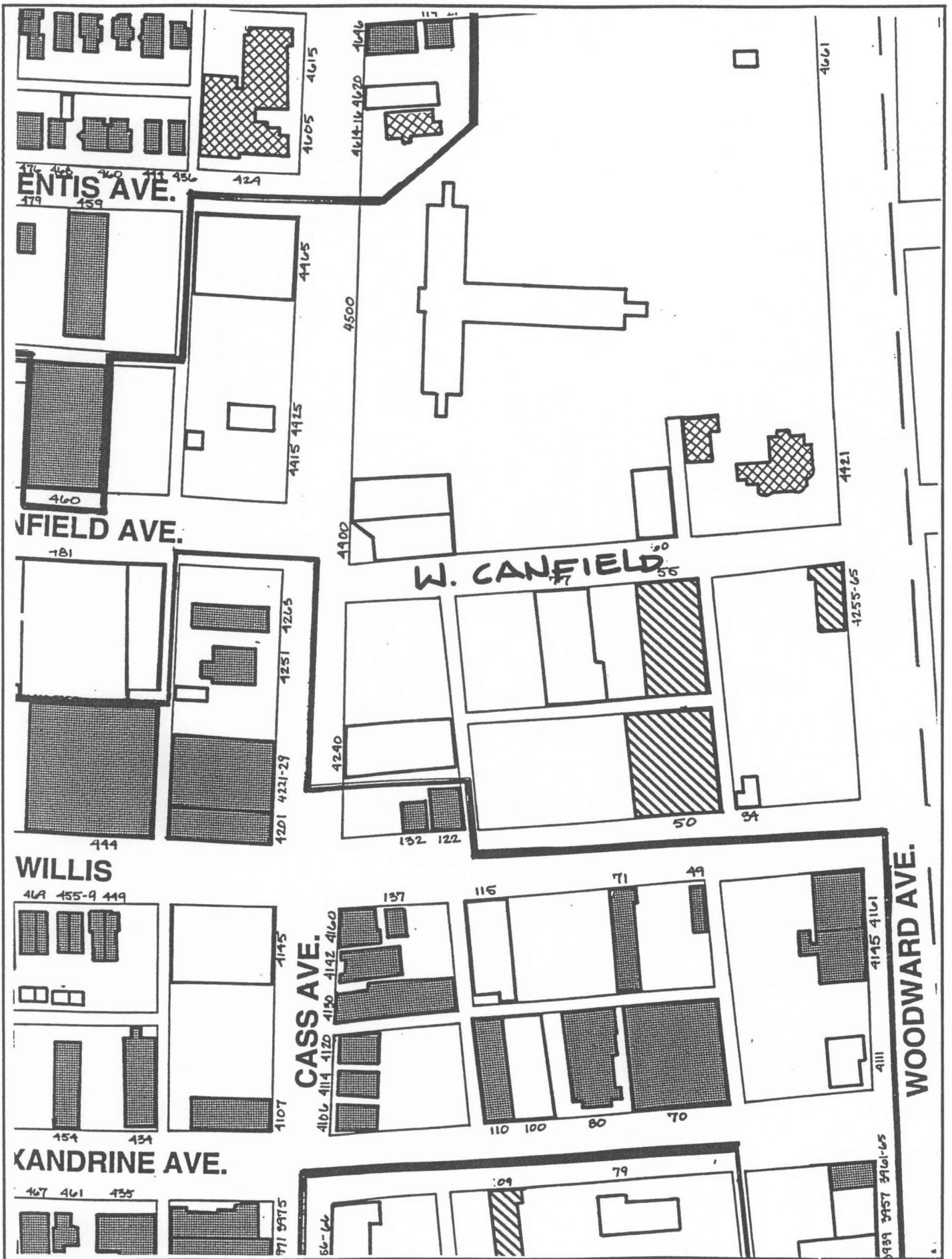
That being the footprint of the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Additional Documentation - Page 1

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Graybar Electric Company Building Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan Gretchen Griner April 1997 University Cultural Center Association (UCCA) Facade (north elevation along W. Canfield) and west elevation of the Graybar Building. #5-



Sketch Map of the Graybar Electric Company, 55 West Canfield

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Graybar Electric Company Building

MULTIPLE NAME: Cass Farm MPS

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 8/08/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/18/97
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/03/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/22/97
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97001096

NOMINATOR: STATE

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 9/22/97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

Graybar Electric Company Building

9700 1096



GRAYBAR ELECTRIC CO. BLDG. - DETROIT, WAYNE, MI

97001096

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64500270