AN ORDINANCE to designate the Saunders Kennedy Building located at 203 South 18th Street as a landmark pursuant to the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

Section 1. That the Saunders Kennedy Building located at 203 South 18th Street, which is on the following described land, to wit:

Lot 4, Block 116, City Lots, along with ½ of the vacated alley on the South, a subdivision as surveyed, platted and recorded in Douglas County, Nebraska, is hereby deemed historically significant and worthy of recognition for the reasons cited in Landmark Heritage Preservation Resolution attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and made a part hereof by reference.

Section 2. That the "Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Buildings", as may be from time to time amended, are hereby adopted as the design standards to be applied in the enforcement of this ordinance and Chapter 24, Article II, of the Omaha Municipal Code.

Section 3. That the Saunders Kennedy Building is hereby designated as a landmark pursuant to Section 24-61 of the Omaha Municipal Code and hereby subject to all of the provisions of this Ordinance and Chapter 24, Article II, of the Omaha Municipal Code.

Section 4. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and take effect fifteen (15) days from and after the date of its passage.
APPLICATION

Return To: City of Omaha Planning Department
Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street, Suite 1100
Omaha, Nebraska 68183

Instructions:
The application for Local Landmark or Landmark Heritage District must be approved by the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission.
Applications must provide, in addition to this form, sufficient drawings, specifications, photographs or other materials to allow the LHPC to evaluate the qualifications of the proposed property.

1. Address of Subject Property: 1721, 1723 Douglas St; 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211 S 18th St

2. Name of Structure: Saunders-Kennedy Building

3. Applicant
   Name: Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture (Submitting on behalf of the Owner)
   Street: 1516 Cuming Street
   City: Omaha
   State: NE
   Zip: 68102
   Phone: 402-341-1544
   Email: jhonebrink@alleypoyner.com

4. Owner’s Signature: Neil Kapadia
   Digitally signed by Neil Kapadia
   Date: 2017/02/15
   Date: 2/16/2017

5. Legal Description
   CITY LOTS LOT 4 BLOCK 116 1/2 VAC ALLEY ADJ ON S & 86 X 142

6. Classification

   Category:
   □ district
   ■ building(s)
   □ structure
   □ site
   □ object

   Ownership:
   □ public
   ■ private
   □ both
   □ public acquisition

   Status:
   □ occupied
   □ unoccupied
   □ work in progress

   Present Use:
   □ agriculture
   □ commercial
   □ educational
   □ entertainment
   □ government
   □ industrial
   □ military
   ■ vacant
   □ museum
   □ park
   □ private residence
   □ religious
   □ scientific
   □ transportation
   □ other (explain)

7. Historic Description and Significance

   Please provide as thorough a description as possible. This should include, but is not limited to, architectural styles and features; site elements, landscaping/urban design elements; architects, builders, and owners. Copies of architectural drawings, photos and similar documents are encouraged. Include a statement explaining why the item/property/district is historically significant. The LHPC staff will assist you in filling out this portion if necessary. Attach supporting documents.

LHPC Use Only

   Case File Number: __________________________
   Hearing Dates: __________________________
   LHPC: __________________________
   Planning Board: __________________________

   City Council 1: __________________________
   City Council 2: __________________________
   City Council 3: __________________________

   Ordinance Number: __________________________

Exhibit A
RESOLUTION – EXHIBIT A
Saunders Kennedy Building
LANDMARKS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

RESOLVED BY THE LANDMARKS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

WHEREAS, Neil Kapadia is the owner of the Saunders Kennedy Building; and,

WHEREAS, this owner, on February 15, 2017, requested that the Saunders Kennedy Building be designated a Landmark under the City of Omaha’s Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance; and,

WHEREAS, the Saunders Kennedy Building is a seven story masonry building located on the southeast corner of 18th and Douglas Street; and,

WHEREAS, the building, was originally designed by architect John Latenser in 1914 as a three-part vertical block office building in the Second Renaissance Revival style; and,

WHEREAS, Latenser’s design is considered the work of a master whose prolific career and individual work is significant in the development of the city and who often employed this particular architectural style; and,

WHEREAS, Latenser’s design of this building has been altered, yet the remaining form of the building provides continuity to the fabric of downtown for the period of significance including building placement, orientation, scale, massing and ground level treatments; and,

WHEREAS, the Saunders Kennedy Building has significant interest and value as part of the development and history of the city as the remaining section of the largest office building in Omaha at one time, which once included the Brandeis Theater Building; and,

WHEREAS, the Saunders Kennedy Building is also significant for its association with the life of several significant people, having been built and operated by some of Omaha’s most influential people at the beginning of the twentieth century; and,

WHEREAS, the building was originally developed by Charles L. Saunders and John L. Kennedy, and was soon after owned and operated by Harry A. Wolf until 1948; and,

WHEREAS, the Period of Significance for the building as established by these standards for designation is 1914 through 1948 before major alterations were made to the building; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LANDMARKS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

THAT, the Saunders Kennedy Building, 203 South 18th Street, be designated as a Landmark of the City of Omaha.

[Signature]
Chair: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission
May 10, 2017
Date
ORDINANCE NO. 41137

AN ORDINANCE to designate the Saunders Kennedy Building located at 203 South 18th Street as a landmark pursuant to the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha.

pln1374ct

PRESENTED TO COUNCIL

1st Reading MAY 16, 2017 - Public Hearing and Third Reading to be held on JUNE 6, 2017 pursuant to City Council Resolution 01141.

2nd - MAY 23, 2017 - Over to

Final Reading JUN 6, 2017 - Passed 7-0

PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATION OF HEARING
Date 5-16-17

PUBLICATION OF ORDINANCE
Date 6-14-17

ELIZABETH BUTLER
City Clerk
Saunders-Kennedy Building – 203 S. 18th Street

Physical description

Summary

The Saunders-Kennedy Building is located in the northwest corner of downtown Omaha. This seven-story tall, three-part vertical block office building was constructed in the Second Renaissance Revival style. Despite alterations over time, the original design is still apparent on the primary facades of the building.

Physical description

Located on the southeast corner of South 18th and Douglas Streets, the Saunders-Kennedy Building stands across from the Edward Zorinsky Federal Building parking plaza and in the shadow of the Woodman of the World tower.

The exterior of the building has a three-part design with a base, body and capital. Each is separated from the other by a distinct belt course and each has a different appearance, although all have classical architectural elements typical of the Second Renaissance Revival style. The granite base features a recessed and rusticated main entry. Other storefront openings are minimized, appearing as punched openings. A ceramic mosaic mural provides decorative relief midway through the base, which is capped by a blue metal signage band. The brick body of the building exhibits tan painted metal bands at each floor level between the rows of paired casement windows. The building’s capital includes the top floor. Decorative stone quoins surround each arched window and extend into stone bands between the windows. Below the bands, decorative stone rings appear to hold hanging leaves. Within the openings, colored spandrel panels are set over modern fixed windows. Vertical metal panels jut out beneath the cornice, which is decorated with a linked chain.

The interior of the building has been modernized over time and contains little apparent historic material, although some may lie beneath the modern finishes.

Alterations

The Saunders-Kennedy Building was originally designed in the Second Renaissance Revival by John Latenser, a well-known local architect who designed many prominent buildings in Omaha and who often employed this particular architectural style. It was constructed by Selden-Breck, a regional construction company with offices in Omaha and St. Louis. The Saunders-Kennedy building mimicked the Brandeis Theater in appearance and was seen as an extension of that building, which filled the north half of this block immediately to the east of the Saunders-Kennedy building. The two shared a fenestration pattern, as well as cornice, belt course and storefront detailing.

By 1952, the decorative belt course over the first floor storefronts had been removed and replaced with a flat extension of a light colored terra cotta base, which set it apart from the Brandeis Theater. The
upper portion of most storefront display windows was also infilled at this time, shortening these areas. Neon lighting and a playful Art Deco storefront was evident at Frolics and in the neon lighting of Thomsen Furs.

In 1954, contractor A.H. Brodkey infilled the courtyard at the east side of the building so that the World Insurance offices could expand.

In 1967/68, World Insurance hired the architectural firm of Kirkham, Michael and Associates to give the building an updated appearance. Leuder Construction Company completed the project, which included the new granite face of the first floor, the metal supports and bands around the body of the building, the removal of the original metal cornice and its replacement with a decorative band, a new entrance and reception lobby, new lighting, new windows, and the installation of the mural.

**Integrity**

By the 1930s, the **Saunders-Kennedy** Building was surrounded by other structures of equal size dedicated to finance and insurance, including City Hall to its south (5 stories), the Insurance Building (7/8 stories on the same block), Omaha National Bank and the United States National Bank a block to its east, the Finance Building (4 stories) and Guarantee Mutual Life building (5 stories) to its west and the Federal Reserve to its north (3 stories). Today, it retains similar associations with the Woodman of the World Tower and the Edward Zornisky building.

The materials and workmanship of the original construction are still intact. Although the detailing of the capital has changed, that of the attic story is still original and the replacement capital allows the building to retain a finished appearance that maintain the scale of the initial design. While the banding in the body is distracting, it is removable. And although the windows have been replaced, they maintain the fenestration pattern set by the original architect. Finally, storefront changes are almost inevitable on commercial buildings. Here, while the granite base replaced the original design, it features a recessed and rusticated entry that was common in Second Renaissance Revival designs, respecting the original design intent.

Altogether, the feeling and association of the building with the Brandeis Theater and with original property owners, while somewhat obscured, is still intact and apparent to those encountering the building.
The Saunders-Kennedy Building at 203 South 18th Street is locally significant from 1914 to 1948 for multiple reasons. First under Criterion A in the area of historical and cultural importance, having significant interest and value as part of the development and history of the city as the remaining section of the largest office building in Omaha at one time. It is also locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the life of several significant people in the past, having been built and operated by some of Omaha’s most influential people at the beginning of the twentieth century. Finally, it is locally significant under Criterion B as the work of a master. John Latenser, a prominent and prolific local architect whose firm grew to encompass the work of his sons and grandsons, as well as various other architects who interned under him.

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

At the time of the Saunders-Kennedy Building’s construction in 1914, this part of the city, on the edge of downtown, was transforming from primarily residential to commercial in nature. The south side of block 116 was built out in the late 1880s with the Old Omaha City Hall and the Omaha Bee Building. It wasn’t until 1910 that the Brandeis Theater was constructed on the north half of the block. Construction began just three years later on the Saunders-Kennedy building.

As noted in the physical description, the Saunders-Kennedy building was designed to match the adjoining Brandeis Theater building in material, style and height. A break in the fenestration pattern was the only clue that the two buildings were not originally constructed together. When completed, the combined Brandeis Theater / Saunders-Kennedy building appeared as one 8 story tall building stretching from 17th to 18th streets.

The two buildings shared interior connections as well as their exterior appearance, with corridors at each level providing access between them. This interior access meant that visitors to the new building could either access the upper floors via elevators at 18th Street or inside the Brandeis Theater building entrance at 17th Street. Together, the two buildings formed “one great office building” that was the largest in Omaha in 1919. The two buildings retained interior connections, and a shared exterior appearance, until the Brandeis Theater’s demolition in 1959. In the mid-1950s, it was still possible to walk from the 18th street entrance in the Saunders-Kennedy Building, through the Brandeis Theater and through the Brandeis Departments Store and out onto 16th street without going outside.

Latenser designed the Saunders-Kennedy with 150 offices at the upper stories and six retail bays at the main level. This was a 50% increase over the 300 offices in the Brandeis Theater. At the east end of the

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1 Sanborn Maps, Omaha, 1890 and 1901-1918.
2 Omaha World Herald, 01-03-1913; 08-30-1925; 08-23-1919
3 Omaha World Herald, 05-01-1959
4 Omaha World Herald, 01-03-1913
Saunders Kennedy building there was an open courtyard space. One of the main level bays contained a restaurant fronting on Douglas Street, directly adjoining the Brandeis Theater. A balcony over the restaurant connected to a store at the corner of 18th and Douglas. The balcony space would be used to serve ice cream and soft drinks. The four remaining retail bays were located south of the elevator entrance on 18th Street. Each had a centered entrance flanked by display windows as well as tiled floors at the interior. Secondary entrances to each store was located off the alley. Each of the office floors above the storefront level contained 25 offices.

By May of 1914, the building was complete. The first tenant in the building was the Guarantee Fund Life Association, which occupied the entire eighth floor. In the coming years, office space in the building would be leased to a variety of tenants ranging from government programs to private companies. Government entities that utilized the space included the Federal Housing Administration during the Great Depression, the Army during World War II, and the Omaha Rent Control Office in the late 1940s. Private company tenants included Kinnear Manufacturing Co., a steel equipment company based in Columbus; Midwest Popcorn Company; Nebraska Wholesale Liquor Distributors Association; and the Independent Order of Foresters, an insurance company.

In 1948 the building was purchased by the World Insurance Company for $450,000. From 1948 until 1987, the World Insurance Company used the building as their headquarters. For the ten years prior to 1948, World Insurance had occupied the Baird Building at 17th and Douglas. During their tenancy in the Saunders-Kennedy Building, the insurance company changed the building's name to the World Insurance Company Building and made a series of alterations. They appear to be responsible for a series of first floor alterations the year they moved in. Large scale changes included an addition in 1954 that infilled an open courtyard at the east side of the building to provide additional office space, additional remodeling in 1960 to accommodate their staff that was displaced when the Brandeis Theater was torn down, and an extensive remodel in 1967/68 that modified the exterior and interior. In 1987, World Insurance sold the building to Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society and moved its offices to a west Omaha location. In 2016, Woodmen of the World sold the building to a private developer.

Criterion A Significance for this associate with Significant People – Saunders, Kennedy and Wolfe

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5 Omaha World Herald, 07-09-1913  
6 Omaha World Herald, 07-09-1913  
7 Omaha World Herald, 07-09-1913  
8 Omaha Bee, 05-29-1914; Omaha World Herald, 06-05-1914.  
9 Omaha World Herald, 11-24-1934; Omaha World Herald, 06-08-1942; Omaha World Herald, 02-06-1947  
10 Omaha World Herald, 12-13-1925; Omaha World Herald, 12-23-1945; Omaha World Herald, 09-25-1941; Omaha World Herald, 09-16-1947  
11 Omaha World Herald, 08-16-1948.  
12 Omaha World Herald, 01-02-1949  
14 Omaha World Herald, 11-06-2016
Arthur Brandeis, Harry A. Wolf and John Kennedy were all involved in the Brandeis Theater at various
times and were later partners in the Saunders-Kennedy building. Initial partners in the Saunders-
Kennedy building venture were Charles Saunders and John Kennedy.

Charles L. Saunders was born in 1857 in Mt. Pleasant, IA. The family moved to Omaha in 1861 when his
father, Alvin Saunders, was appointed governor of the Nebraska Territory. After graduating from
Omaha’s public school system, the younger Saunders attended Cornell University and Columbia College
law school. Upon completion of a four-year stint in Montana, Saunders returned to Omaha in 1886 and
engaged in the real estate business. By 1918, he was president of the Saunders Investment Company,
incorporated in 1908, and president of the Omaha Real Estate Company, incorporated in 1886. He
served as a director of the Merchants National Bank, on the board of the Forest Lawn Cemetery, and on
the board of governors of Ak-Sar-Ben. He was also active in the local Elks Club and Masonic Scottish Rite
and Mystic Shrine. A staunch Republican, Saunders served on the republican central committees for
Douglas County and the state of Nebraska. He was also an elected representative in the Nebraska state
senate for seven terms. At the time of his unexpected death in 1927, Saunders had served as a realtor
for 40 years and been an active member of his community in a variety of ways.15 His death, an obituary
in the Omaha World Herald noted, brought an end to a “career of leadership in civic affairs and
Nebraska republican politics.” In that same obituary, his friend and former business partner John L.
Kennedy remembered him as “a wonderfully fine fellow. Everyone was his friend. He was a man
absolutely without guile.”16

John L. Kennedy was also well-respected in Omaha circles. He was born in 1855 in Scotland and
immigrated to America at the age of 19. He graduated from the University of Iowa with a law degree
and at the turn of the twentieth century started a law practice in Omaha. He served as president of the
U.S. National Bank from 1920 to 1925, Chairman of the board of directors of the United States Trust
Company, director and attorney for J.L. Brandeis & Sons, and president of Omaha Clearing House. A
staunch Republican like Saunders, Kennedy was active in politics. He was known for his support of
women’s suffrage, prohibition, and Postal Savings Banks. In 1905, he was elected to the United States
congress for one term. His bid for reelection in 1906 was unsuccessful, as was a later bid, in 1916, for
election to the United States Senate. Kennedy owned considerable property throughout Nebraska,
much of which he donated. In 1933, Kennedy moved to Pacific Palisades, California for health reasons.
He died there in 1946 at the age of 91. An obituary announcing his death in the Omaha World Herald
noted that he was “long Prominent in Omaha.”17

In the initial years, from 1914 to 1917, management of the building rested in the hands of John
Kennedy. In 1917, the Alfred C. Kennedy Co. took over building management for a brief period and
moved its offices into the building.18 In 1919, Harry A. Wolf purchased Kennedy’s interest in the
Saunders-Kennedy Building Co. That same year, Wolf took out a long-term lease on the Brandeis Theater
building. An Omaha World Herald article discussing these acquisitions described how this gave Wolf,
“control of the entire block between 17th and 18th Streets on Douglas” and put him in “charge of the

15 Omaha World Herald, 01-07-1927; Illustrated History of Nebraska, Vol. 3; Omaha: The Gate City, 1918, p. 40
16 Omaha World Herald, 01-07, 1927
17 Omaha World Herald, 08-31-1947; http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/kennedy5.html#R9M0J2R1K
18 Omaha World Herald, 01-07-1917
largest office building in Omaha, covering four city lots, eight stories high.” In 1926, when the H.A. Wolfe Company purchased the building from the Saunders-Kennedy Building Company, Harry Wolf was also listed on the deed as the secretary of the Saunders-Kennedy Building Company.

*Omaha, the Gate City, and Douglas County,* noted that by 1917, Harry Wolf had been in town for a dozen years and had made a name for himself as someone who organized syndicates to buy and improve downtown property. Born in Russia in 1884, he was orphaned at 2 and raised by his older sisters. He moved to New York by himself when he was 13, obtaining a job as a factory errand boy and going to night school. After several years, he moved to Philadelphia where he worked for a lawyer and real estate broker while he continued his studies. At 20, he moved to Omaha and entered the real estate business, earning a reputation for his knowledge of Omaha’s downtown real estate values. He was “known for his honest, fair and frank dealings and has succeeded in obtaining the confidence of many of the foremost financial men of the city, whom he has interested in the various syndicates and who have profited through his investments.” In 1936, he was voted Omaha’s Outstanding Jewish Citizen. Just before his death in 1950, he reduced his portfolio from 20 property holding companies to 10. He was also a 32nd degree Mason, a member of the IOOF, president of the Omaha Hebrew Club (the largest in the west), at various times treasurer and director of the Omaha Real Estate Board, and was a member of several other local societies.

The depth of Arthur Brandeis’s involvement in the Saunders Kennedy Building is unclear. A 1924 article about his estate lists shares of the Saunders Kennedy Building Company among other investments that E John Brandeis would inherit upon his father’s death. The Brandeis Company and the Saunders Kennedy Company did have a series of agreements about their shared party wall. The Brandeis and Kennedy families were certainly connected, with Kennedy asking as the family attorney and as a director of the Brandeis Store. A newspaper article about a ceremony to lay the first brick of the Brandeis Theater includes Kennedy among the short list of named attendees and a photo of the Saunders Kennedy foundation shows members of the Brandeis family, Kennedy, Latenser and Saunders in attendance.

**Criterion B Significance as Work of a Master**

Saunders and Kennedy hired local architect John Latenser to design their new building at the southeast corner of 18th and Douglas. Latenser was a prolific architect in Omaha and designed many notable buildings downtown, including the adjoining Brandeis Theater Building, the Brandeis Department Store one block to the east, the Omaha Athletic Club directly to the north, and the Douglas County Courthouse one block to the south. The Brandeis Theater building and Omaha Athletic Club are no longer extant. He also designed homes for many prominent Omaha businessmen, including the Reinhold B. Busch Residence in the West Central Cathedral District. Finally, his work can be seen regionally in many Iowa schools, the Holt County Courthouse, the Municipal Building in Alliance and the Nebraska Masonic

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19 Omaha World Herald, 08-23-1919
20 Omaha World Herald, 08-11-1924
21 It may be that these have been mislabeled. Omaha World Herald 07-15-1909; Durham Western Heritage Photo Archive BF10-025(3)
22 Omaha World Herald, 09-01-1929; Omaha World Herald, 12-7-1936.
23 Cathedral Local Landmark Nomination
Home in Plattsmouth Nebraska. Latenser and his firm have even been featured in the newsletter of the Liechtenstein embassy in Omaha.

In a career that spanned over 50 years, Latenser had several notable repeat clients and contracts, as well as notable buildings. He worked for the Omaha Public School system designing 35 school buildings as well as their early additions. His work is also represented on all of the University of Nebraska campuses. Additionally, President McKinnley appointed him superintendent of construction of government buildings for a six state territory.

Coming from a family of architects in Liechtenstein, Latenser built his own here in Omaha, literally and figuratively. His sons John Jr, Frank and George all became architects, joining him in his firm, as did three of his grandsons. Other local architects also got their start working for him, including William Findley.

Conclusion

Today, despite exterior and interior changes, the Saunders-Kennedy building stands as a testament to several prominent local businessmen who set out to make their mark on Omaha’s expanding downtown cityscape. They wanted a building that would be beautiful and stand the test of time, and so they hired Omaha’s leading architect of the day, John Latenser. Though much has changed or been hidden by later alterations, elements of Latenser’s original Second Renaissance Revival design remain visible today. The building’s significance is also elevated by the fact that its companion building to the east, the Brandeis Theater, is no longer extant. The Saunders-Kennedy building is therefore the only remaining element of what was once Omaha’s largest office building.

Nomination Prepared By

name/title: Jennifer Honebrink and Caitlin Benton
organization: Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture Incorporated
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Omaha, NE 68102
e-mail: jhonebrink@alleypoyner.com
telephone: 402.341.1544
date: February 2017

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24 Architecture and Design Vol IV, No 29, Dec 1940
25 Nebraska State Historical Society Architect’s page
26 Omaha World Herald, 12-7-1936
Saunders Kennedy Bldg

Period Of Significance 1914-1948

Statement of Significance

Criterion A – in the area of historical and cultural importance, having significant interest and value as part of the development and history of the city as the remnant of the largest office building in Omaha

Criterion A – in the area of significant people in the past, having been built and operated by some of Omaha’s most influential people at the beginning of the twentieth century

Criterion B – Work of a Master – John Latenser
Criterion A

in the area of historical and cultural importance,
having significant interest and value as part of the development and history of the city
as the remnant of the largest office building in Omaha

An extension of the Brandeis Theater
Designed and constructed only 3 years after the theater
Owned and operated by an interconnected groups of men until 1948
Functioned together until the theater was torn down in 1959
Brandeis Theater
1910
John L Kennedy was director and Attorney for J.L. Brandeis & Sons Co.
Saunders Kennedy Building

Planned and started construction in 1913 – just 3 years after the theater was completed

Construction completed in 1914
Design Intent

- Intended to be an extension of the Brandeis Theater Bldg just to the west (OWH, 01-03-1913)
  - Exterior was to match in material, style and height
  - Corridors of both buildings were to be connected at each level
  - New building was to have elevators at 18th Street, tenants could either enter there or via the Brandeis Theater building entrance at 17th
  - Together the two buildings formed “one great office building” that was the largest in Omaha in 1919 (OWH, 08-30-1925; 08-23-1919)
    - Photo of buildings appears in OWH, 08-30-1925 in article celebrating buildings constructed in last 10 years
    - The two buildings retained interior connections until at least 1955 (OWH, 02-14-1955)
- 150 Offices at upper stories and six stores at main level (OWH, 01-03-1913)
  - Restaurant fronting on Douglas Street, directly adjoining Brandeis Theater building. Balcony over restaurant to connect to corner store and to be used to serving ice cream and soft drinks. (OWH, 07-09-1913)
  - South of elevator entrance to contain 4 stores, each having a centered entrance flanked by display windows. Secondary entrances to each store would be located off alley. Stores to all have tiled floors. (OWH, 07-09-1913)
  - Each office floor to contain 25 offices. (OWH, 07-09-1913)
- By 1955, it had grown into a 1,150 ft long indoor corridor
  - Entering the Saunders Kennedy building at main entrance on 18th St, take the elevator to the 5th fl, walk east across the Brandeis Theatre Building, then take the elevator to the lowest level, which is the first floor of the Brandeis Store and extends under 17th St, walk across the store and next the 16th St entrance take the stairs to the basement of the Woolworth store, up the stairs to the street level then across the store to the alley exit between Douglas and Dodge Streets.
Interestingly, this 1918 Baist Map, implies that the Brandeis Theater building and Saunders-Kennedy building are one. This also happens in the Durham Western Photo Archive where the Saunders-Kennedy building is not named separately in many early photos.
Brandeis Theater/
Saunders Kennedy
C. 1930-1940

Found in the photo archive as the Brandeis Theater
Brandeis Theater/
Saunders Kennedy
1934

Note “S Insurance Bldg Annex” on the South side of the Brandeis Theater
World Ins Bought the building in 1948 and seems likely to be responsible for the first floor alterations seen here. Known work at the time was the installation of air conditioning.

1954 – World Ins infused the courtyard you cannot see from the main facades. This allowed for the expansion of all the insurance company’s departments, especially the claims and underwriting sections.
The Brandeis Theater was torn down in Dec 1959 and construction was started on the current parking garage.

World Insurance occupied 8,000 sf of space in the Brandeis Theater before its demolition, so they had to relocate offices when it was demolished (12-16-1959)
Between the 1960 photo and this one, the cornice has been removed – likely at the insistence of City Planning for safety reasons.
April 1967 work was begun on a remodel of the building.

Architects – Kirkham, Michael and Associates

General Contractor – Lueder Construction Co.

The building was to be faced in white, light tan and blue with a 7-foot high glass mosaic strip and new windows.

At interior, reception area and elevator lobby remodeled, new entrance, new lighting, and extensive remodeling of first floor.

This work caused the building to be one of 12 winners of City Beautification Awards in 1968.
Criterion A

In the area of significant people in the past

having been built and operated by some of Omaha’s most influential people at the beginning of the twentieth century

Charles L. Saunders 1857-1927 - American
President of the Saunders Investment Company
President of the Omaha Real Estate Company
Director of the Merchants National Bank
Representative in the Nebraska state senate for seven terms
40 year career in local real estate

John L. Kennedy 1855-1946 - Scottish Immigrant
President of the U.S. National Bank from 1920 to 1925
Chairman of the board of directors of the United States Trust Company
Director and attorney for J.L. Brandeis & Sons
Known for his support of women’s suffrage, prohibition, and Postal Savings Banks.
United States congressman for one term, elected 1905

Harry Wolf 1884-1950 - Russian Immigrant
President of the Omaha Hebrew Club
1936 Omaha’s Outstanding Jewish Citizen
20 property holding companies
40 year career in local real estate
Saunders Kennedy Bldg
June 27, 1912
BF10-025(3)

Saunders Kennedy Building
Construction/West end of Brandeis Theatre Building on 18th & Douglas Streets, Omaha, Nebraska. First brick laying by E. John Brandeis

Either this photo is mis-labeled or there were two ceremonies – one for the Theater building and one for the Saunders-Kennedy Bldg. A 1909 OWH article recounts a brick laying ceremony for the Theater with Ervin Brandeis, Arthur Brandeis, John J. Kennedy, Mayor Dahlman, and other notable businessmen.
Brandeis Theater
1919-26

In 1919 H.A. Wolf bought out Kennedy’s interest in the Saunders-Kennedy Building Co.

When he bought the building in 1926 from the Saunders-Kennedy Company, Wolf signed as the secretary of the Saunders-Kennedy Building Co.

It is unknown at this time who else invested in the company. A 1924 article on the estate of Arthur Brandeis noted that his son John would inherit shares in the Saunders Kennedy building among other investments.
Criterion B

Work of a Master — John Latenser
Returning to its Roots
Leaving Modified Cornice
Restoring Integrity to Body and Base