

Oliver Chilled Plow Works Branch House

Staff Contact: C. Jeffries

Location and Current National Register Status: The Oliver Chilled Plow Works Branch House is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is located on the western side of Oliver Hill Way, just north of the Leigh Street viaduct. The building is one of the few structures that survived the widespread demolition and urban renewal of this area. As a result, it is relatively isolated and not located near a concentration of other historic buildings.

History and Significance: The Oliver Chilled Plow Works Branch House is being nominated under National Register Criteria A for commerce/trade and C for architecture at the local level. The structure consists of three warehouses built between 1919 and 1923.

The oldest portion of the Oliver Chilled Plow Works Branch House served as a regional office and distribution warehouse from 1892. The Oliver Chilled Plow Works was a plow and farm equipment manufacturer established in 1823 internationally known for their strong and efficient plows. The company expanded the Richmond branch house in 1916 and again in 1919 as demand grew. The Oliver Corporation owned the property until 1969. The period of significance for the building spans from 1886 to 1968 with significant dates of 1886 and 1923.

The nomination states that the buildings demonstrate the evolution of industrial warehouse construction technologies from load-bearing brick construction to reinforced concrete. The newest section of the structure is one of a collection of buildings in the city with a concrete structural frame and brick curtain walls. Most of these buildings are located within existing National Register districts, only two (Meter Repair Building, E. M. Todd Company building) are individually listed.

Staff Recommendations and Comments:

Staff recommends that the Commission support the nomination of the structure under National Register Criteria A and C at the local level. Although the application of the National Register criteria indicates that the structure is eligible for individual listing, staff is concerned about the practical outcome of listing the structure individually. Though the structure's association with the Oliver Corporation may merit individual listing, staff is ultimately concerned about the architectural significance of the building on an individual level.