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NPS Form 10-900  
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NPS/CHS Word Processor Format  
(Approved 03/88)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility 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 box 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. Use letter quality printers in 12 pitch. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name The J.S. Brown Mercantile Building  
other names/site number 5DV.47.061

**2. Location**

street & number 1634 18th Street (n/a) not for publication  
city, town Denver (n/a) vicinity  
state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80202

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
(x) private	(x) building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
( ) public-local	( ) district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
( ) public-State	( ) site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
( ) public-Federal	( ) structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	( ) object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total
Name of related multiple property listing: <u>N/A</u>		No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register <u>0</u>	

**4. 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.  
( ) See continuation sheet.

Barbara Sudler

9-28-88

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Colorado Historical Society  
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

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- (x) 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Helena Byrum

11/3/88

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. Functions or Use**

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Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Department Store/Warehouse

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Vacant/not in use

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials  
(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial style

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other: Renaissance Revival

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foundations Granite

walls Brick

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roof Asphalt

other Sandstone trim

Metal canopies

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The J.S. Brown Mercantile building, constructed in 1899, is a rectangular, 5 story brick warehouse located on the southwest corner of 18th Street and Wynkoop Street. Designed by Gove and Walsh in 1899, it is a post and beam, heavy timber building. It has brick walls, sandstone basement walls and trim, a granite foundation and flat roof. There are double hung round arched windows on the first and fifth floors and semi-arched windows on the intervening floors. Embellishments include a complexly corbelled brick frieze and cornice, two dressed sandstone stringcourses beneath fifth and second story windows, and recessed vertical window bays rising from the second floor to the fifth story arches. There is also corbelling under the fifth story windows. The building is abutted on the south side by another brick building, the Spice Warehouse, which was built in 1906 (photos 1 and 2.)

There are two loading docks facing east and west. A photo from Jerome Smiley's History of Denver, 1901, shows both docks to be original to the building. In 1916 the east dock was restructured and enclosed (photo 4). The west dock was converted from wood to concrete ca. 1930, and a metal canopy was erected in 1955 (photo 5). The first floor arched windows facing the east dock have been temporarily boarded over (photo 6), and a freight elevator which services the five floors and basement connects the main floor to the dock. The windows on the west dock have been altered. There are indications that some of the original workmanship still exists under the plywood covering the windows (photo 8). The main entrance still faces 18th street and this side of the building is unaltered (photo 1). Exterior changes are minimal and do not significantly alter the historic character of the building.

(x) See continuation sheet

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Section number 7 Page 2

J. S. Brown Mercantile

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On the interior, changes include 1 elevator shaft off each dock; the east one was added in ca. 1930, and the west one in 1954. Both run from the basement to the fifth floor. A dumb waiter/conveyor belt, and one set of stairs, which run the height of the building are original. Fire walls and supports have been added to the stairs over the years. Other than the two elevator shafts, there are very few changes on the top four floors. They have been used from 1899 to today for storage, and retain their original floors and walls and ceilings (photo 9).

The basement consists of rusticated sandstone walls, heavy timber columns, exposed deck ceilings and concrete floors. Arches like those of the main floor windows lead to a cellar-like space underneath the east dock.

On the main floor, the approximately 12,000 square feet have been broken up into two equal spaces by a nonoriginal partition running east to west. The wall is 2 x 4s and plywood and was erected in ca. 1980. In the south facing room, there is no ornamentation, i.e. tin ceilings, wainscoting, or paneling. The east and west facing windows have been bricked in and/or covered over. Along the west wall, there are 2 sheetrock vestibule-like "rooms" surrounding two of the loading dock entrances. In the north facing room, where Brown's showroom and offices for his mercantile business were located, most of the original ornamentation is still intact. This includes stamped tin ceilings, wainscoting, maple floors and original windows. The columns are paneled in oak, and topped with ornate capitols on two sides. The capitols consist of 3 large decorative Acanthus leaf corbels underneath an egg and dart pattern. (Photos 11 and 13.) All of the windows facing 18th Street are still intact, as is the original entrance (photos 12 and 14). The offices are enclosed by a brick wall on the south and east sides, and a plaster wall on the north. Two of the offices that face Wynkoop retain some of their original ornamentation. There is also a vault whose door is framed by two Ionic pilasters and a detailed entablature along the top. There were other rooms added in the 1980s that served as employee lounges. There is nothing of architectural significance in these rooms.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:      ( ) nationally      ( ) statewide      (x) locally

Applicable National Register Criteria      (x) A ( ) B (x) C ( ) D  
 Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)      ( ) A ( ) B ( ) C ( ) D ( ) E ( ) F ( ) G

Areas of Significance  
 (enter categories from instructions)      Period of Significance      Significant Dates

Commerce      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_  
Architecture      1899-1937      1899

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_      Cultural Affiliation  
 \_\_\_\_\_      N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person      Architect/Builder  
N/A      Aaron M. Gove and Thomas Walsh

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The building meets Criterion A as a representation of the importance of the wholesale grocery business to a growing city. It also meets Criterion C for its representation of the Commercial style and as the work of a master i.e. Gove and Walsh. The J. S. Brown Mercantile building is significant in the history and development of Denver as a western center of commerce. John Sidney Brown started his mercantile business in 1861, and by 1899 Denver's pioneer grocer ran the largest mercantile business in the West from his warehouse at 1634 18th Street. The building is also significant architecturally as a fine example of the 19th century Commercial style in Denver. Wynkoop Street was recognized as early as 1871 as being "the best street in the city for warehouses." Many of the warehouses along Wynkoop were built by the successful architectural firm of Aaron Gove and Thomas Walsh. The Brown Mercantile, in its grandness of scale and simplicity of design, is one of the finest.

The city of Denver first sprang up along the banks of Cherry Creek as settlers staked their claims in the gold mining industry. Denver was founded in 1858, and soon grew into the center of commerce for the western region. Merchants arrived in Denver and created industries that would be essential to the growth of a young city: millers, ironworkers, brickmakers, brewers, and grocers were among them. In 1861, John Sidney Brown and his brother Junius Flag Brown made their first trip to Denver from Kansas. They sold their goods at wholesale from the back of wagons, and a business was born. That same year J.S. Brown formed a partnership with Alvin B. Daniels, and moved into a building at

(x) See continuation sheet

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J. S. Brown Mercantile

15th and Blake. In 1863 the building and all the inventory, was destroyed by fire. By 1864 they had moved into a building on 14th and Blake, only to have their merchandise destroyed by the Cherry Creek flood that year. The building survived and there they stayed until 1899, when J.S. Brown took controlling interest in the company by buying out his brother J.F. Brown and built the warehouse at 1634 18th Street to house the extensive wares of J.S. Brown and Sons Mercantile. J.S. Brown was also one of the men instrumental in bringing the railroad to Denver. In 1868 he was one of the men who broke ground for the railroad and continued to lobby and raise money until the completion of Union Station in 1881. It is no coincidence that his warehouse sits conveniently across from Union Station. According to the Denver Times of 1902, Brown's warehouse was "a magnificent structure, fitted up in a perfectly modern style, having railroad switches in its front and rear, and every convenience necessary for the prompt transacting of business." J.S. Brown died in 1913 and the business survived under his sons' leadership. Unable to weather the depression, it was sold to Morey Mercantile Co., Brown's only competitor, in 1937. 1634 18th street continued to be used as storage through the sale of Morey Mercantile to Consolidated Foods in 1956 and has been used as storage as recently as January 1988.

Architecturally, the building is significant as the work of a master and as possessing a high artistic value. The architectural firm of Gove and Walsh was regarded by many as the best in Denver. They designed many of Lower Downtown's finest warehouses, including the C.S. Morey Mercantile in 1896, Brown Mercantile in 1899, the Littleton Creamery in 1903, and the Barteldes Seed Company in 1906. They were also commissioned for the Peters Paper Company warehouse in 1899, the Beaux Arts Center portion of Union Station in 1914, and both Morey's and Brown's residences. Aaron Morrill Gove was born in Illinois in 1867. His family settled in Denver, where his father became a prominent educator and superintendent of the Denver schools. Before opening his firm in 1894, Gove worked in Denver for Robert Roeschlaub from 1887 to 1891, and then for the Boston firm of Andrews, Jacques and Rantoul. Thomas Walsh was born in Chicago in 1866 and worked with two significant architectural firms before joining Gove in 1894. During his early years he was employed with Edbrooke and Burnam, supervised the building of Roeschlaub's Trinity Church in Denver, then returned to Chicago to work with Holabird and Roche for 6 years.

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It was in Chicago that the Commercial style was first born. The railroad provided merchants with the ability to move large quantities of goods, so larger storage spaces were needed, and engineering advancements made 5-20 story buildings possible. The Commercial construction style is characterized by large rectangular plans, evenly balanced horizontal and vertical lines, many windows, and projecting cornices. The Commercial style borrowed from others for its decoration; Italianate, Romanesque, and Renaissance motifs were commonly used. The J. S. Brown Mercantile building has all the classic traits of the Commercial style, and some of the Renaissance Revival; a grandness of scale, repeated arch motifs, and recessed window bays drawing the eye to the intricate brickwork of the cornice are balanced by the smooth stringcourses which break up the vertical lines. The fifth story arches are more Romanesque, as is the overlapping arch pattern of the cornice. Brown's building is typical of the warehouses designed by Gove and Walsh, but is grander than most in its size and clarity of design. It is a testament to their art that this building retains its design integrity after 89 years of use.

The interior also retains most of its original decoration and is typical of the commercial style. The top floors of most warehouses were storage space and remained undecorated. However, the display area and offices were dressed up to reflect the success of J.S. Brown and Sons Mercantile Company. Brown used the best materials he could find; Oregon pine and oak were used to panel the columns and walls and the room was enhanced by maple floors. Pressed tin ceiling panels, a decoration used almost exclusively in commercial buildings, adorned the ceilings and helped in fire prevention. All of this detailing still exists in parts of the first floor at 1634 18th Street. The building has been used as storage until recently.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Smiley, Jerome C., History of Denver. Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901.

Denver Times, volume 32, November 17, 1902; volume 40, November 23, 1947; volume 42, January 15, 1913.

(x) See continuation sheet

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- (x) State Historic Preservation Office
- ( ) Other State agency
- ( ) Federal agency
- ( ) Local government
- ( ) University
- ( ) Other

Specify Repository:

Colorado State Historical Society

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 1|3| 5|0|0|1|8|0| 4|4|0|0|1|8|0|  
Zone Easting Northing

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
Zone Easting Northing

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
Zone Easting Northing

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
Zone Easting Northing

( ) See continuation sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1-5 inclusively, block A East Denver

( ) See continuation sheet

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes lots historically associated with the J.S. Brown Mercantile Building.

( ) See continuation sheet

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title Barbara Macfarlane-Schehrer  
Organization Wynkoop Brewing Co. Date May 27, 1988  
Street & Number 1625 S. Cook Telephone 759-8185  
City or Town Denver State CO Zip Code 80210

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Historic Denver Inc., 1987.

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Privately printer, Denver, Co, 1911.

Denver City Directories: Baist's 1905 map.

Wiffen, Marcus, American Architecture since 1780. The Riverside Press, Inc.,  
Cambridge, Mass, 1977.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photos Page 1

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All the photographs for the J.S. Brown Mercantile Building, located in Denver, CO., were taken by Barbara M. Schehrer. They were taken on May 25, 1988. All the original negatives are at Ms. Schehrer's house at 1625 S Cook St, Denver, CO. 80210. The above information is the same for all photographs. For a description of the view indicating the direction of the camera, please see below.

photo #:

1. Facing N.E. from corner of 18'th and Wynkoop, showing 18'th St entrance.
2. Facing N.E. from the 5'th floor of the building diagonally across the street, corner of 18th and Wynkoop

There is no photo #3.

4. Facing S.W. from 18'th St, showing back loading dock.
5. Facing E. from corner of 18'th and Wynkoop, showing front loading dock.
6. First floor, north room, facing E. Shows existing condition of windows out to back loading dock.

There is no photo #7

8. First floor, south room, facing west. Shows workmanship that still exists under newer facades.
9. Forth floor from S.W. corner of room. All the upper floors from second to fifth are the same, and have the same floors, beams, and ceilings represented in this photo.

There is no photo #10

11. First floor, north room. Shows capitols and tin ceiling.
12. First floor, north room, looking N.E. towards 18'th St.
13. First floor from N.E. corner of building. Shows north room.
14. First floor, north room, facing 18'th St.