

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ken-Rad Lamp Plant

Other names/site number: American Cigar Company Plant / DAOB 1046

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 601 E. Ninth Street

City or town: Owensboro State: KY County: Daviess

Not For Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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5. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Industrial/manufacturing facility

Current Functions

Vacant

6. Description

Architectural Classification

Late Victorian: Italianate

Modern Movement: Art Deco

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____ stated below _____

Foundation: Solid brick masonry (original section), brick piers (1937 and 1944 sections)
Walls: Brick masonry (original section), steel frame (1937 and 1944 sections), structural clay tile (1946 sections)
Roof: EDPM membrane (original section), thermoplastic polyolefin membrane (later additions)

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Ken-Rad Lamp Plant (DAOB 1046) occupies a .95-acre parcel at the northeastern corner of Bolivar and Ninth (formerly McFarland) streets. The building is set into a shallow hillside; the basement of its original 1919 section is therefore mostly below grade, while that of the 1937 and 1944 rear extensions functions as a primary story and is accessible by automobile. Built by contractor Leo Monarch in a spartan, late-Italianate style, the 1919 portion is a two-story, brick rectangular mass with segmental-arched windows. These consisted of two six-over-six sashes but have since been replaced by aluminum storms. The 1937 and 1944 steel-framed, brick additions, which were constructed by Hoffman Contractors with Art Deco detailing, project from the building's rear (north) elevation with an "L" massing and are three full stories. Large fixed-sash, multi-pane, metal windows are present throughout these newer blocks and are separated into bays by brick pilasters that run the full height of the building. In 1946, a 2.5-story addition composed of structural clay tile was attached to the east elevations of the 1919 and 1937 sections; a six-story tower in the same style was also added. Aside from the replacement of the original building's wood sash windows, the plant has been lightly modified since the conclusion of its Period of Significance.



Ken-Rad Plant, Owensboro KY

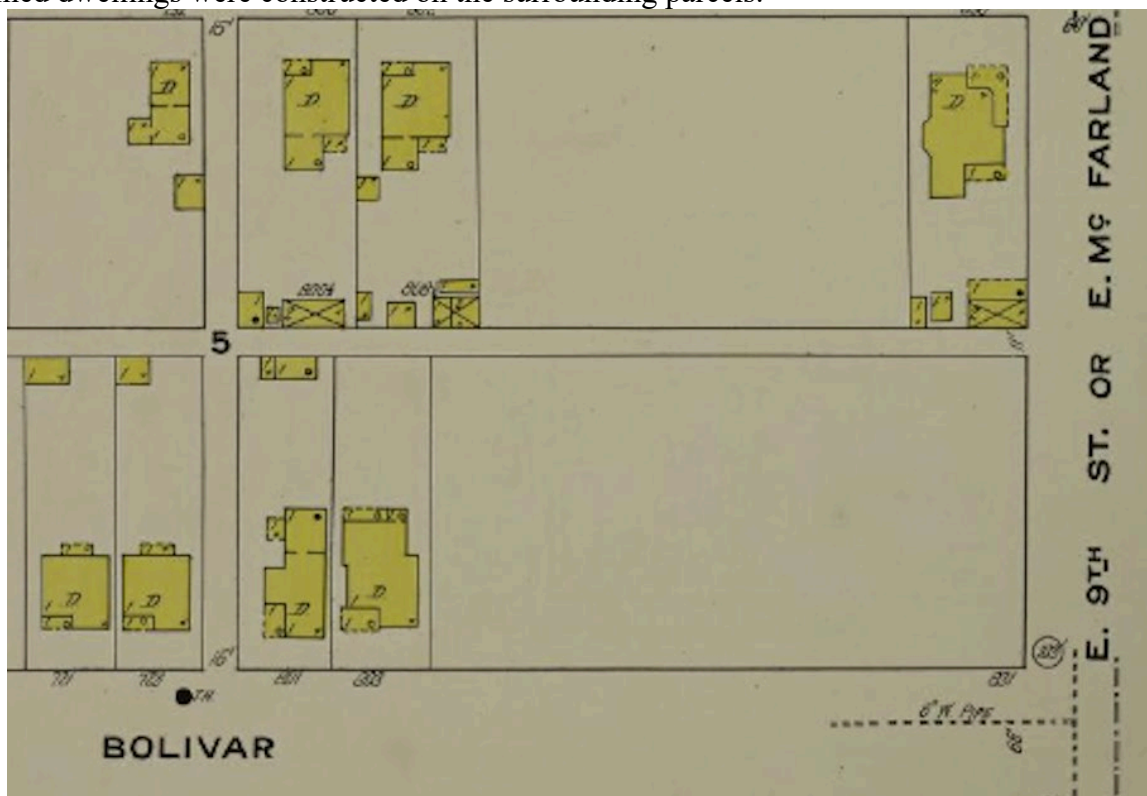
Latitude: 37.768377, Longitude: -87.104475

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History of Site Before Period of Significance

In the late nineteenth century, the parcel on which the plant sits was owned by local lawyer and former congressman W. N. Sweeney, who amassed \$200,000 worth of real estate.¹ Upon his death in 1895, these holdings were divided evenly between his children — James J. Sweeney, William C. Sweeney, A. G. Sweeney, and Jessie Erwin.² These descendants proceeded to trade the undeveloped lots; Jessie, who by this time was living in Kansas City, acquired the property at Ninth and Bolivar in 1900.³ She did not develop the land but still hung on to it for nineteen years before selling to contractor Leo. A. Monarch and his wife, Odie. In the interim, single-family framed dwellings were constructed on the surrounding parcels.



1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance map

Chain of Ownership

Year	New Owner	Deed Book	Page
2025	Friends of Sinners to Kelly Skelton	1107	507
2024	Virginia and Athony Kurlas to Friends of Sinners	1099	527
2024	Jane H. Yeiser Trust to Virginia Kurlas (trustee)	1099	522
2004	Billy Joe and Jane Yeiser to Billy Joe Yeiser Living Trust	793	191
1975	Robert and Barbara Moorman to Billy Joe Yeiser	451	202

¹ *An Illustrated and Historical Atlas of Daviess County, KY* (Leo McDonough & Co., 1876), 36.

² “Left No Will,” *Owensboro Daily Messenger*, April 26, 1895.

³ “Personal,” *The Inquirer*, November 29, 1900.

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1973	Westinghouse to Moorman	433	1
1945	Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation to Westinghouse	162	318
1941	Lucy M. and W. Tom Monarch to Ken-Rad (Bolivar lot, north)	150	598
1941	Carrie and Essie Bennett to Ken-Rad (Bolivar lot, north)	150	132
1936	Kentucky Electric Lamp Company to Ken-Rad (cigar factory)	136	432
1935	Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation to K.E.L.C	134	265
1935	L. A. Monarch et. al (via master commissioner) to Ken-Rad	Book N	282
1919	Jessie Erwin to Leo A. and Odie Monarch (328" by 127.5")	101	590
1900	James Sweeney (subdivision of land) to Erwin	71	493

Additional transactions resulting from lawsuit

1936	Wallace and Leona Davis to K.E.L.C (quit claim deed)	136	203
1936	L. A. Monarch to Wallace and Leona Davis (quit claim deed)	136	82



1913 USGS topographic map (site of plant indicated by blue star)

Exterior Description

In its 1919 iteration, the plant presented as a rectangular, two-story, load-bearing brick building with a basement level that was partially above grade. Its common-bond façade, which abuts Ninth Street, consisted of five bays on the first story, with two windows flanking both sides of a recessed central entry; the easternmost window has since been filled in with brick. The upper story contains six bays. Originally, each of these windows was placed above a stone sill and surmounted by a segmental brick arch. These features are generally still intact, but three of the openings have been filled in with brick and glass block. The façade is unornamented aside from the ghost signs that embellish the space above the windows on both levels. The west elevation of

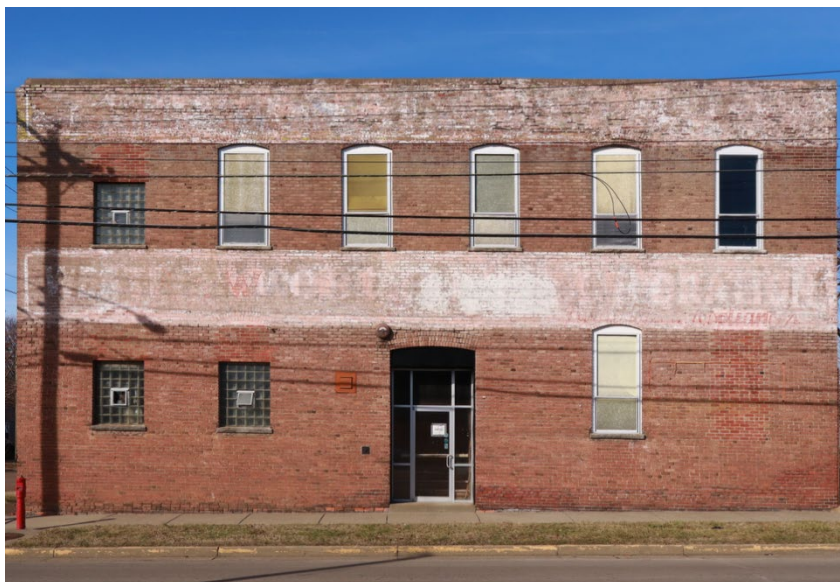
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the original plant is comprised of nineteen bays that contain segmental-arched windows on each story. Thirteen fenestrations were retrofitted with glass block after the period of significance.



Façade (const. 1919)



West elevation (const. 1919, 1937, 1944)

Three-story additions in 1937 and 1944 expanded the building northward by eight bays (four per campaign). Unlike the older plant, these extensions were constructed in a restrained, Art-Deco style that harmonized with the new wings that were simultaneously being added to Ken-Rad's tube plant further west on Ninth Street. Built to accommodate heavy industrial output, these steel-framed masses rest on brick pier foundations, while their walls were laid in running-bond. Tripartite, fixed-sash, metal windows with stone sills punctuate the bays; those on the upper stories are six panes in height, while those on the primary level are only three panes tall. The bays themselves are divided by brick pilasters with stone coping, some of which have been covered with metal sheathing to prevent their deterioration. This scheme repeats on the six-bay,

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north elevation of the 1944 addition; two enormous ventilation ducts are also attached to this area. The east elevation of the 1944 section consists of four bays with the same features.



North elevation (const. 1944) and west elevation (const. 1919, 1937, 1944)

The area lying between the south elevation of the 1944 section and the east elevation of the 1937 addition clearly served as a loading zone. The former contains two vehicle entries on the primary story; the two upper levels each feature the usual tripartite metal window and a thinner version in the westernmost bay. An enclosed brick stairwell, which includes fenestrations on its south elevation alone, projects from the main mass. To the immediate south of this stairwell, the east elevation of the 1944 block consists of a single bay with a quadripartite metal sash window on the second and third levels, while a (bricked-in) vehicle entry and two-over-four sash window is situated below. In 1946, Westinghouse constructed a 2.5-story, structural clay block addition to the east elevations of the 1919 and 1937 sections.⁴ This wing, which contained a boiler room and new restrooms, was reinforced with exterior horizontal and vertical metal bracing. Four three-over-four windows are present on its east elevation, along with two such windows on the south of each floor. A six-story tower with an enclosed freight elevator was budgeted as part of this \$250,000 building campaign and was likely erected around the same time, though it does not appear on the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

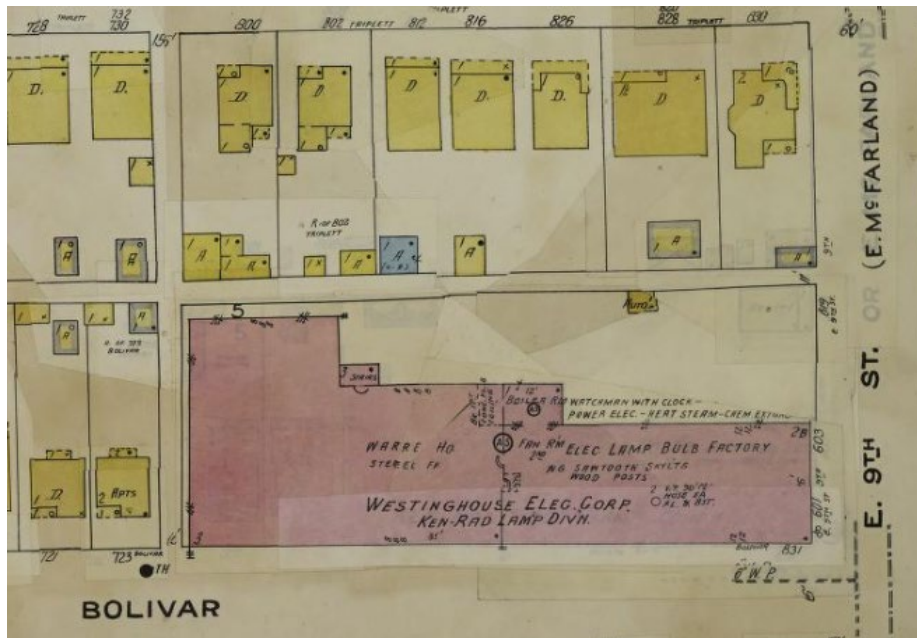
⁴ "Westinghouse Electric Corp., To Spend Quarter Million To Improve Ken-Rad Plant Here," *Owensboro Messenger*, August 18, 1946; "Owensboro's Industrial Picture is Bright," *Owensboro Messenger*, August 20, 1946.

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South elevation (const. 1944) and east elevation (const. 1944 and 1950s)



1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map

The east elevation of the 1919 section initially included twelve segmental arched windows on its first level, along with a door to the north of the southernmost seven windows. The later widening of this entry led to the loss of one window; the fenestration to the north of it has also been partially filled in and replaced by a smaller door. The second story retains its windows in their original square and rectangular formations. The southeast, upper corner of this elevation is distinguished by a large Ken-Rad ghost sign that remains legible.

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South elevation (const. 1944, 1950s) and east elevation (const. 1919)

Interior Description

The plant is largely open concept, with few internal dividing walls. The basement of the 1919 section is approximately eight feet high; wood posts with trapezoidal capitals sit on concrete plinths and support the beams above; the floor itself is concrete as well. A solid brick wall separates the basement of the 1919 plant from the primary level of the 1937 addition. This area, like the 1944 expansion into which it seamlessly merges, contains steel I-beam posts that support the steel girders and beams overhead. The first floor of the original plant is also quite open, with taller wooden posts supporting two parallel beams that run north to south. The southwest corner of this area was compartmentalized into office space at some point, while a staircase was added to the southeast corner. This section retains its original wood flooring. The second level of the original plant is in a rather more deteriorated condition. Possibly during the Westinghouse era, office cubicles were erected in the space between the western line of support posts and the exterior wall.

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First floor, 1919 section of plant, facing south

Much like the primary level of the 1937/1944 sections, the second and third floors are strictly functional and have not received any modern alterations. The exposed steel framing enabled this space to operate in a modular manner, allowing for the easy movement of materials and machines. The floors of these upper levels are wooden. One accesses the restroom block, which was constructed in 1946, through a door on the east elevation of the 1937 addition's second story. A metal contraption in the northwest corner of the third floor was likely used to regulate the external ventilation ducts that were added as part of the 1946 improvements. On the opposite brick wall, which divides the north wall of the original building from the latter additions, an elevator with an original pull-down wood gate is set into the southwest corner.

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1944 addition third floor, facing northwest



Restroom in 1946 addition

Changes to the Property Since the Period of Significance

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No additions have occurred since the Period of Significance. As the assessment of integrity clarifies, sixteen of the windows on the original 1919 building have been filled in with glass block and brick, though the segmental arches above remain. The wood sash windows in this section have also deteriorated and have largely been replaced with aluminum storms. A doorway expansion on the east elevation likely occurred in the Westinghouse era. Two ventilation skylights on this block have also been removed.



Bolivar Street lamp plant, "Ken-Rad Launched Modern Progress Era," *Owensboro Messenger*, March 1, 1953

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our 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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
Removed from its original location
- B. A birthplace or grave
- C. A cemetery
- D. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- E. A commemorative property
- F. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

Industry

Period of Significance

1919-1953

Significant Dates

1919, 1937, 1944

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Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Builder: Leo Monarch (original building)

Builder: Hoffman Contractors (1937 and 1944 additions)

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

A lynchpin of Owensboro's economy, the American Cigar Company/Ken-Rad Lamp Plant ((DAOB 1046) fulfills National Register Criterion A and is significant within the historic context of *The Second Industrial Revolution in Owensboro, Kentucky, 1870-1960*. The original portion of the building was constructed in 1919 for the American Cigar Company (ACC), which continued to rent out the space until 1930. During this period, the ACC — a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company — increasingly dominated the national cigar industry by producing low-cost goods through the use of new technologies and unskilled labor. This plant was one of only three facilities in Kentucky that the ACC operated. Around 1934, the Ken-Rad Tube & Lamp Corporation moved its lamp division to the former cigar plant; it formally purchased the building in 1935 and built two additions in 1937 and 1944. Owensboro's main employer by the 1940s, Ken-Rad pulled the city "up with it economically with every step it took toward becoming one of the outstanding industries of the South."⁵ During World War II, the federal government deemed the company to be a strategically important producer and actually seized the Owensboro plants following a lengthy labor dispute. Retaining its physical integrity, the American Cigar Company/Ken-Rad Lamp Plant testifies to Owensboro's historical position as a nationally-recognized tobacco hub and a leader in electrical device production. A Period of Significance from 1919 to 1953 begins with the construction of the building and concludes with the formal dissolution of the Ken-Rad Corporation. While Westinghouse operated the plant from 1945 onwards, the building remained indelibly associated with the Ken-Rad legacy.

Historic Context: The Second Industrial Revolution in Owensboro, Kentucky, 1870-1960

Introduction

By the late 1920s, the city of Owensboro boasted "most than thirty distinct varieties of manufactures" and claimed "to rank second among the industrial centers of the state."⁶ This explosive growth was part and parcel of what historians have termed the "Second Industrial Revolution." In their 2016 National Register nomination of the Kentucky Buggy Company Building, Rachel Kennedy and Emily Skinner crafted the "Second Industrial Revolution in Owensboro, Kentucky, 1870-1960" historic context statement, from which this study will draw. Echoing historian Michael Lind, they associate this revolution with the development of electrical power, mass production, petroleum, and the formation of conglomerates. Such industrialization, they note, did not affect all industries uniformly. Many of Owensboro's 88 manufacturers of horse-drawn vehicles continued to assemble their goods by hand, but they benefitted from the more ready availability of machine-made parts.⁷ Still, the proliferation of cheaper automobiles

⁵ "Not Farewell to Ken-Rad, But Hail To the Fruits Of its Work for 27 Years In and For Owensboro," *Owensboro Messenger*, March 1, 1953.

⁶ Samuel M. Wilson, *History of Kentucky*, vol. 2 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928), 585.

⁷ Rachel M. Kennedy and Emily Skinner, "Kentucky Buggy Company Building — National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," 2015, 29.

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gradually rendered the carriage trade obsolete, and Owensboro failed to evolve into the “Detroit of the South.”⁸

In this nomination, I suggest that the Second Industrial Revolution in Owensboro impacted its other chief industries — namely tobacco processing and electrical products — in more acute ways. This wave of mechanization destabilized a traditional (male) culture of manufacturing, pitting expert artisans against a new pool of unskilled, cheaply-paid labor. In the case of the cigar industry, the national union struggled to respond to these changing trends and counter the burgeoning market dominance of the American Cigar Company. Decades later, the tide shifted and a wholly different drama played out in same facility. The Ken-Rad Corporation’s newly unionized employees leveraged their role as key wartime producers to exact concessions from the company. As the interests of the city and Ken-Rad had grown inextricably intertwined, the resultant takeover of the plants by the federal government rattled the region. Recovering the history of the American Cigar Company/Ken-Rad Lamp Plant at Ninth and Bolivar allows us to better understand the massive human and economic impacts of the Second Industrial Revolution in one of Kentucky’s chief manufacturing centers. Compiling a history of the Ken-Rad Corporation will necessarily involve a discussion of its main plant at Ninth and J. R. Miller Boulevard., but this National Register-eligible resource is not included in this nomination.

The American Cigar Company and the History of Tobacco Production in Daviess County

In the early nineteenth century, Owensboro emerged as a key center for tobacco production, rehandling, and manufacturing.⁹ The heavy-bodied “Green River” varietal flourished in Daviess County and was especially prized for its use in snuff, plug, and stogies; it was particularly sought-after in the European market.¹⁰ On account of this surging global demand, one local judge concluded in 1870 that “Daviess may be set down as the largest tobacco-growing county in the State.”¹¹ Owensboro’s advantageous location near the Green and Ohio rivers contributed to its growth as a commercial entrepot, as these waterways could accommodate sizable barges laden with hefty tobacco-packed hogshead containers.¹² Indeed, the bulk of the region’s tobacco was conveyed by boat to Louisville for re-export until after the Civil War, when the introduction of the White Burley varietal in the Bluegrass and the opening of a direct Cincinnati-Lexington rail line reoriented the axis of the tobacco trade. As a transit hub, Owensboro also attracted primary and secondary processing industries. Workers at the “stemmeries,” for instance, removed the stems from tobacco prior to shipping it to Europe, thereby reducing weight-based tariff costs. By 1872, fifteen of these facilities were operating in Owensboro, along with three cigar makers.¹³ Prussian immigrant Adolph Helmke had introduced

⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹ Local histories credit Major John H. Smith with establishing the first tobacco “factory” west of the Alleghenies in Owensboro by the 1830s.

¹⁰ W. F. Axton, *Tobacco and Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 99.

¹¹ *History of Daviess County, Kentucky* (Chicago: Inter-state Publishing, 1883), 181.

¹² Axton, 49.

¹³ *History of Daviess County, Kentucky*, 331. Across the state, the number of stemming and rehandling plants surged from 20 in 1880 to 139 in 1890.

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the city to this latter industry only twelve years prior.¹⁴ Despite the advent of loose-leaf tobacco auctions in the Bluegrass, evolving transport technologies, and changing tastes that favored White Burley, Owensboro clung to its share of the market. Even in the late 1920s, it remained “second only to Lexington as a rehandler and shipper of the loose-leaf output, and [was] an especially important market for the dark tobacco.”¹⁵

The formation of national conglomerates profoundly impacted the tobacco trade on a local level. In 1890, J. B. Duke infamously united the larger enterprises in the East to form the American Tobacco Company (ATC), which in turned spawned the related Continental Company and Consolidated companies.¹⁶ The magnates behind these concerns used every tool in the box to monopolize the tobacco trade, engaging in ruthless price wars with smaller producers and buying controlling stock in their rivals’ operations.¹⁷ In 1901, the ATC created the American Cigar Company (ACC) with an initial stock of \$10,000,000 to stage a hostile takeover of the “large cigar” sector using similar methods. Yet this new entity only managed to control 13% of the industry, which remained highly decentralized and — for the time being — reliant on traditional hand-manufacturing.¹⁸ American Tobacco, Continental, and Consolidated merged into a new American Tobacco Company in 1904, by which time they had absorbed at least 250 firms.¹⁹

As the capitalization of this tobacco “Trust” increased from \$2,500,000 in 1890 to \$350,000,000 in 1910, the federal government took notice and successfully prosecuted the combination for violating the recently-passed Sherman Anti-Trust Act.²⁰ Whereas the Supreme Court had ordered other transgressors of this legislation such as Northern Securities and Standard Oil to sell off their holding companies and distribute the proceeds to their stockholders, it held that monopolism in the tobacco trade would only desist if the ATC itself was broken up into four entities. The ATC did manage to retain a hold of the ACC, as that company would have been bankrupted if it was completely spun off.²¹ In Kentucky, the ACC continued to make inroads by opening mechanized plants in Owensboro, Paducah, and Louisville that produced cheap five-cent “Cremo” cigars. This disruptive strategy exacerbated simmering tensions amongst traditional cigarmakers, prompting heated debates over the merits of unionization, female labor, and new technologies. The ACC, much like the Ken-Rad Corporation after it, thus both accelerated Owensboro’s economic productivity and ushered in a new era of fraught labor relations.

¹⁴ Ibid., 463.

¹⁵ Wilson, 585.

¹⁶ The directors of Consolidated, who controlled the stock of American Tobacco and Continental, had created this new entity as a holding company in expectation of tax reductions on tobacco products. For a thorough explanation of these financial dealings, see “Growth of the Tobacco Trust,” *Courier-Journal*, February 19, 1909.

¹⁷ Harold Evans, “The Standard Oil and American Tobacco Cases,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Review* 60, no. 5 (1912): 315.

¹⁸ Albert Charles Muhse, “The Disintegration of the Tobacco Combination,” *Political Science Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1913): 260.

¹⁹ Axton, 82.

²⁰ Muhse, 253.

²¹ Ibid., 258.

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By the nineteen teens, the cigar industry was destabilizing. On the one hand, a burgeoning global demand for cigarettes was undercutting demand. On the other, artisanal cigar-makers who produced these commodities by hand were being supplanted by unskilled, cheaper, and largely female laborers. Traditionally, a single (male) worker would participate in each stage of the secondary processing, creating a cigar from filler, binder, and wrapper tobacco leaves. Until around 1910, many in the industry proclaimed that hand-rolling yielded a superior product, and their clientele concurred. However, the innovation of the long filler bunching machine around 1912 and the International American Machine and Foundry Company's automatic wrapping device in 1919 created a paradigm shift.²² Costing \$4,500, each machine could churn out 4,000-6,000 cigars daily and only required four young women to monitor it. The Cigarmakers International Union (est. 1864) had long opposed the Trust and its creatures like the ACC, which subverted the organization by using unskilled labor. But the union's initial anti-automation position increasingly ran counter to public opinion, as wartime industrialization helped dispel a longstanding prejudice against machine-made wares. The ACC further spurred this shift through a deceptive marketing campaign that alleged unsanitary "spit-tipping" practices in hand-rolling.²³ The percentage of hand-made American cigars therefore shrank from 70% in 1924 to only 20% in 1929.²⁴

This seismic shift in production methods was driven in no small part by the ACC, which took great pains to recruit women to its new factories. The resultant "displacement of labor in individual establishments in most cases... was accomplished with demoralizing suddenness."²⁵ In 1916, the ACC adaptively reused the old Price-Klein furniture warehouse in Owensboro's Seven Hills subdivision. Backed by the Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Club, this scheme promised to give 300 women weekly employment; its boosters lauded the facility's modern amenities and claimed that the "company will eventually have by far the largest payroll of any manufacturing plant in Owensboro."²⁶ The Owensboro City Railroad even introduced a ten-minute car service to transport girls to the plant from the downtown.²⁷ For its part, the ACC fashioned itself a magnanimous community partner, professing that it prioritized the employment of local women and spent hefty amounts on their training.²⁸ Yet the company usually failed to attract more than 200 women to its ranks. This shortfall may be attributed in part to the erratic work rhythm of the cigar industry, as production spiked in late summer to meet the Christmas demand and plummeted thereafter.²⁹

²² Willis N. Barr, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States* (Lancaster, PA, 1933), 196.

²³ Russell Mack, *The Cigar Manufacturing Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 28.

²⁴ Barr, 201.

²⁵ Mack, 110.

²⁶ "American Cigar Co. to Locate Plant in Seven Hills," *Owensboro Daily Messenger*, October 5, 1916; "American Cigar Co. Opens Monday," *Owensboro Inquirer*, November 29, 1916.

²⁷ "Working Force Will be Doubled," *Owensboro Messenger*, December 23, 1916.

²⁸ "175 Women Employed at American Cigar Co. Plant," *Owensboro Messenger*, March 23, 1917.

²⁹ Mack, 90.

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If the Men Over There Were to Send a Message to the Men Over Here, It Would Be This:

"Stick to the Job and City Where You Can Produce Most to Help Us Win This War"

To the Skilled Workers of Owensboro the Message Would Be

"Stay In Owensboro"

If Industry Slows Down, So Does the War Machine

This War Demands 100 Per Cent Industrial Efficiency Every Instant

And the Drifter Doesn't Help Himself at All

You are leaving a certainty for an uncertainty. Besides you are making a gap in your own efficiency of production at a time when you and every other American wants to produce as much as possible.

Don't do it! Don't give up a certainty for an uncertainty. Don't break up your home because momentarily the Lure of Elsewhere is strong.

F. A. AMES CO. (Incorporated)
OWENSBORO FORGING CO. (Incorporated)

BRANSFORD MILLS (Incorporated)

CENTRAL TRUST CO. (Incorporated)
L. A. MONARCH
General Contractor

Advertisement in the *Owensboro Messenger*, July 7, 1918

City leaders had clearly anticipated that a surge in female employment would buoy Owensboro's economy in wartime. One editorial in the summer of 1917 reminded readers that it was "the duty of every young woman to become a producer. An army of over a million men is taking the field. Other millions may go. Producers are being taken away from every city and village."³⁰ Local firms took out full page advertisements in the *Owensboro Messenger* that linked the city's industrial output with military victory. Despite these entreaties, the staffing at the Seven Hills plant still struggled to reach capacity. While the ACC exclusively recruited white women in Owensboro and its environs, it relied on African-American labor elsewhere in its network of 66 factories.³¹ In 1917, 600 Black female operatives at its Norfolk, Virginia, plant went on strike with the aid of the Women Wage Earners' Association.³² This labor action was not successful, and the further mechanization of the production process continued to erode their bargaining position in the 1920s. The Norfolk plant, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, has since been demolished.

In July 1919, the ACC announced its relocation to a new 60-by-160-foot cigar plant that would be constructed at the northeast corner of Bolivar and Ninth.³³ The company anticipated

³⁰ "Owensboro Must Kick In," *Owensboro Inquirer*, July 22, 1917.

³¹ "Paducah Girls are Prize Cigar Makers," *News-Democrat*, April 19, 1917.

³² Sarah McPhail and Marcus Pollard, "American Cigar Company — National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," 2009.

³³ "Plenty Material," *Owensboro Inquirer*, July 27, 1919.

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that this “location will [be] much more convenient for the employees of the company who live in the central and western part of Owensboro than is the Seven Hills plant, and will thus make easy the matter of running always with a large force of employees.” The ACC did not own this facility, but rather rented it from contractor Leo Monarch, who built it that same year. Monarch’s family name was synonymous with the industrial growth of Owensboro. “One of the most prominent pioneers of Daviess County,” Leo’s grandfather, Thomas, helped introduce commercial distilling to the region.³⁴ His sons — including Leo’s father, Sylvester — followed him into this trade, but also diversified into the carriage and steamboat industries.³⁵ Upon Leo’s completion of the cigar plant, the *Inquirer* lauded this project and the new Kentucky Electric Lamp Company building as “the most important construction work of the year” in Owensboro.³⁶ By 1926, the cigar factory was the ACC’s largest operation in Kentucky, employing 411 workers compared to 333 and 163 in their Paducah and Louisville plants, respectively.³⁷

The mechanization of the cigar industry led the ACC to significantly alter its allocation of resources in the late 1920s. The effects of this realignment reverberated through Kentucky and Tennessee. Much as it had in Owensboro, the ACC sold Paducahans the dream of economic productivity through female employment. Celebrating its plants “as the model factories of the world,” replete with libraries, reading rooms, and dressing rooms, the ACC promised to spend \$250 on skilling each recruit.³⁸ But in December 1929, company leadership decided to consolidate and invested \$2,500,000 in reconfiguring the ATC’s Louisville plant at Madison and Thirteenth.³⁹ Months later, the Paducah plant closed suddenly, leaving 200 women unemployed; superintendent Julius Wohl regretted that “modern progress should throw these people out of work.”⁴⁰ Under the helm of the intrepid Bessie Wilford, a small number of these laborers formed their own Wilford Cigar Company based at 391 S. Third.⁴¹ The ACC simultaneously closed its plant in Clarksville, Tennessee, which was “in line with the policy of the company to change from hand-made cigars to those manufactured by machine.”⁴² In April 1930, longtime manager V. W. Brizendine announced the shutdown of the Owensboro plant. This winddown reflected the “company’s policy of consolidation. Large factories have recently been opened in Louisville and Kansas City, in which modern machinery is replacing hand manufacture.”⁴³

³⁴ *History of Daviess County, Kentucky*, 427.

³⁵ University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lawrence W. Hager papers, Box97ms501-17, folders 23, 46, 47, 49. Between 1894 and 1897, Sylvester built Highlands, one of the “finest examples of Queen Anne architecture in Owensboro.” It was nominated to the National Register in 1986 as the La Vega Clements House, reflecting its later ownership.

³⁶ “Building Boom to Gain Speed in the Year 1920,” *Owensboro Messenger*, January 4, 1920.

³⁷ Axton, 107.

³⁸ “Great Cigar Factory to Locate Here,” *News-Democrat*, February 9, 1917.

³⁹ “New Factories Open,” *Sun-Democrat*, December 8, 1929. The ACC projected that this expanded plant would accommodate 2,500 employees, though that estimate soon shrank to 1,800. See “Heart Throbs of Business,” *Courier-Journal*, June 11, 1929; “Expansion of Industry Seen,” *Courier-Journal*, January 1, 1930.

⁴⁰ “State News Briefs,” *Sun-Democrat*, April 18, 1930; “Paducah Loses Cigar Factory,” *Courier-Journal*, February 22, 1930.

⁴¹ “Paducah Girls Organize Cigar Plant of Own,” *Sun-Democrat*, April 18, 1930.

⁴² “American Cigar Plant Closes at Clarksville,” *Owensboro Messenger*, March 8, 1930.

⁴³ “Cigar Plant to Stop Operation,” *Owensboro Messenger*, April 15, 1930.

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Revolutionary changes in manufacturing technology and labor practices thus occurred during the ACC's decade-long lease of Monarch's factory. The mechanization of the assembly process, which a generation of young women workers oversaw, undercut the traditional, artisanal mode of production. Yet the ACC's progressive strategy of automation rendered this large labor force largely superfluous by the 1930s. Monarch's plant is certainly a rare, intact remnant of Owensboro's storied tobacco sector, but its history also speaks to the corporatization of the national economy and contested industrial relations in interwar America.

The Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation Drives Owensboro's Industrial Resurgence

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, General Electric (GE) wielded near-monopolistic control over the light bulb (lamp) industry. It had established this dominance through several mechanisms. Having emerged victorious in a price war with Westinghouse, GE created the Incandescent Lamp Manufacturers Association in 1897; this cartel "fixed proportional output keyed to GE's sales," assuring that it would retain a 50% market share.⁴⁴ Vigorously asserting its patent rights, GE also developed an onerous licensing system by which smaller companies could use protected technologies in exchange for relinquishing control of their output and pricing. Frequently, GE or Westinghouse would then buy back this inventory and sell the bulbs through their own networks of retailers, thus controlling all aspects of production and marketing. To skirt the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, GE tasked a third party with acquiring these subordinate entities and formed the National Electric Lamp Company.⁴⁵ It then purchased the bulk of this company's stock and covertly reaped significant profits from its supposed competitor. Eventually, the federal government got wise to this chicanery and prosecuted GE for anti-competitive practices in 1911, 1924, and 1941. The company won the first two of these cases based on the legality of its patent rights for tungsten filament bulbs, which did not lapse until 1930. Its fiefdom secured, GE boosted its lamp production from 80 million units in 1910 to 319 million units in 1928.⁴⁶ To put this monopolism in perspective, the Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation was the fifth largest producer of tungsten-filament light bulbs in America in 1937, but its output only accounted for 1.1% of sales nationally.⁴⁷

Upon the final dissolution of the Ken-Rad Corporation in 1953, the *Messenger* recalled that its history "reads like a dream come true in the story of Owensboro's industrial progress."⁴⁸ In the nineteen teens, the city's economy was at an inflection point, as its buggy sector was struggling to adapt to the age of the automobile.⁴⁹ The arrival of Roy Burlew and M. E. Pierson in 1918 therefore "proved to be an event of greater importance to the history of this community

⁴⁴ Leonard S. Reich, "Lighting the Path to Profit: GE's Control of the Electric Lamp Industry, 1892-1941," *Business History Review* 66, no. 2 (1992): 308.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁴⁷ Behind GE and Westinghouse, Sylvania manufactured 4.4% of bulbs and the Consolidated Electrical Lamp Company produced 2.8%. See Arthur A. Bright Jr. and W. Rupert Maclaurin, "Economic Factors Influencing the Development and Introduction of the Fluorescent Lamp," *Journal of Political Economy* 51, no. 5 (1943): 431.

⁴⁸ "Ken-Rad Launched Modern Progress Era – Owensboro's Greatest Industrial Growth Followed," *Owensboro Messenger*, March 1, 1953.

⁴⁹ Hugh O. Potter, *History of Owensboro and Daviess County* (Owensboro: Daviess County Historical Society, 1974).

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than the approaching Armistice was to the rest of the world.”⁵⁰ Previously, these men had worked as sales and production managers at a bulb plant in Emporium, Pennsylvania. They were attracted to Owensboro by the prospect of acquiring the struggling Kentucky Electrical Company, which already held a license from GE to manufacture tungsten bulbs. Well into the 1940s, Burlew continued to hold GE’s “B” license, which only permitted the production of incandescent bulbs and charged a much higher royalty rate than the favorable “A” license Westinghouse had secured.⁵¹

Initially, the newly rebranded Kentucky Electrical Lamp Company began operating on the second floor of the Smith Machine Company Building, which lay directly to the north of the Kentucky Buggy Company’s factory at 817 J. R. Miller Boulevard.⁵² The near-simultaneous end of the war threatened to upend this enterprise, but GE soon increased the KELC’s permitted output to 75,000 bulbs. This enabled Burlew and Pierson to construct a bespoke, two-story plant nearby at the southeast corner of Ninth and J. R. Miller Boulevard in mid-1919.⁵³ Local journalist Lawrence Hager surmised that this facility

might not have been built for some time, but for the fact that contractor Leo Monarch had acquired large quantities of salvage in wrecking the old chair factory near Chautauqua Park and was able to give the young company favorable terms after the backers, who were in the iron and steel business in Pennsylvania, went broke in the slump in their business that followed the war’s end.⁵⁴

In 1922, Burlew expanded into radio tube production after a fortuitous encounter with an electrical appliance buyer at the Montgomery and Ward department store in Chicago, who noted that both items shared a similar fabrication process. Try as he might, Burlew could not secure a license to manufacture tubes from patent-holder RCA until 1929. He therefore began producing his own variants without authorization out of a small shop at First and Frederica “under constant threat of litigation from the big companies in the North and East.” Soon, his staff of 12 swelled to 400, which necessitated a four-story addition to the Ninth Street complex in 1929.⁵⁵ For this project, Burlew tapped the Hoffman contracting firm of Evansville, Indiana, who introduced a stripped-down Deco aesthetic that would guide later construction.⁵⁶ Around 1930, Burlew established the Ken-Rad Tube and Lamp Corporation as a holding company for the lamp and radio tube divisions.

⁵⁰ “Not Farewell to Ken-Rad, But Hail To the Fruits Of its Work for 27 Years.”

⁵¹ Bright and Maclaurin, 432. If “B” license holders like Ken-Rad overproduced, they were forced to pay an additional royalty rate of 20% as a penalty. See U. S. Congress, Senate, Temporary National Economic Committee, *Investigation of Concentration of Economic Power*, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 1941, 100.

⁵² “Ken-Rad Lamp Division May be Sold,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 4, 1945. When Burlew first occupied the building, it had direct access to the Owensboro-Nashville railroad line, which ran directly down J. R. Miller Boulevard. See Keith Lawrence, “Historic industrial building being razed,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 20, 2002.

⁵³ “Plenty Material.”

⁵⁴ Lawrence Hager, “History of Ken-Rad,” September 18, 1943, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lawrence W. Hager papers, Box97ms501-19, folder 31.

⁵⁵ “Ken-Rad Launched Modern Progress Era.” For evidence of Ken-Rad’s success in 1929, see “Kenrad Declares Cash Dividend Totaling \$58,000,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, December 8, 1929.

⁵⁶ “Ken-Rad to Erect Two Buildings to Cost \$200,000,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, March 16, 1937.

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**Photograph of Ken-Rad plant at southeast corner of Ninth and J. R. Miller Boulevard
Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, July 26, 1931**

As his fortune grew, Burlew commissioned Evansville architect Albert E. Neucks to design a sprawling Colonial Revival residence and tasked Monarch with the construction. But within two years of its completion, Burlew filed suit against the Fidelity and Casualty Company — which had provided Monarch with surety on his contract bond — for shoddy workmanship that resulted in sinking floors, buckling panels, and a sagging roof.⁵⁷ It appears Burlew received the \$23,347 that he sought for replacement costs; to add to Monarch's woes, Fidelity then sued him to recoup the \$4,152 it had spent on his defense.⁵⁸ In the months prior to that judgment, the circuit court had already compelled Monarch to sell his assets to satisfy an accumulated debt of \$18,845.⁵⁹ Creditor Wallace Davis, who had been awarded \$3,000 through these proceedings, successfully bid on the former cigar plant when it was auctioned off in February 1935.⁶⁰ Curiously, a newspaper notice indicates that *Monarch* then transferred the property to Ken-Rad in August 1935 for the same amount as Davis' winning bid.⁶¹ The deed records confirm this conveyance.

⁵⁷ "Judge Dawson Hears \$23,347 Burlew Suit," *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 7, 1931.

⁵⁸ "Circuit Court Suit," *The Inquirer*, January 15, 1935.

⁵⁹ "In Circuit Court," *The Inquirer*, December 6, 1934; "Old Cigar Plant Bid In For \$9,050," *The Inquirer*, January 7, 1935.

⁶⁰ "Cigar Plant is Sold for \$9,271," *The Inquirer*, February 26, 1935.

⁶¹ "Real Estate Transfers," *The Inquirer*, August 9, 1935.

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Contemporary accounts credited Ken-Rad — as Owensboro’s “largest single industry” — with stabilizing the city’s economy and bucking national trends.⁶² Indeed, it was “recognized throughout the country as one of the few manufacturing operations that expanded during the Depression.”⁶³ Owensboro arguably transformed into a company town in this period. Contractors developing the new Buena Visita neighborhood in 1929 “attributed the increase in demands for residences in the city to the number of people that Ken-Rad Lamp and Tube Co. is bringing in.”⁶⁴ In 1931, local stores celebrated Ken-Rad’s “jubilee week” with lavish window displays, while restaurants even offered special Ken-Rad menus.⁶⁵ In later years, the community’s enthusiasm for the company persisted; the *Messenger* retrospectively rejoiced that “Owensboro licked the depression” on account of Ken-Rad’s “size, payroll, [and] business increase.”⁶⁶ That year, the tube factory had produced nine million units, while the lamp plant manufactured six million bulbs. On one momentous evening that May, 632 1500-watt Ken-Rad lamps illuminated Cincinnati’s Crosley Field — a first for major league baseball. President Roosevelt activated this display remotely from Washington:

In the smallest part of the fraction of a second after the presidential digit had touched the knob, Crosley Field burst into what looked exactly like the brilliant sunshine of a summer afternoon. It seemed like a miracle.⁶⁷

In reality, this display was a savvy business arrangement. Prowell Crosley Jr., who owned the Cincinnati Reds and the Crosley Radio Corporation, also happened to be the operator of WLW — a powerful broadcasting station with an insatiable appetite for the tubes that Burlew readily supplied.⁶⁸

⁶² Works Progress Administration, *Real Property Survey of Owensboro, KY* (1940), 6.

⁶³ “Not Farewell to Ken-Rad, But Hail To the Fruits Of its Work for 27 Years.”

⁶⁴ “Strong Demand Here for Homes,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, August 11, 1929.

⁶⁵ “Owensboro Business Houses to Celebrate Ken-Rad Jubilee Week,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, July 26, 1931.

⁶⁶ Hugh O. Potter, “Many Industries Set New Records During Last Year,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, January 1, 1936.

⁶⁷ “Ken-Rad Lamps Are Used to Light Crosley Field,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, May 26, 1935.

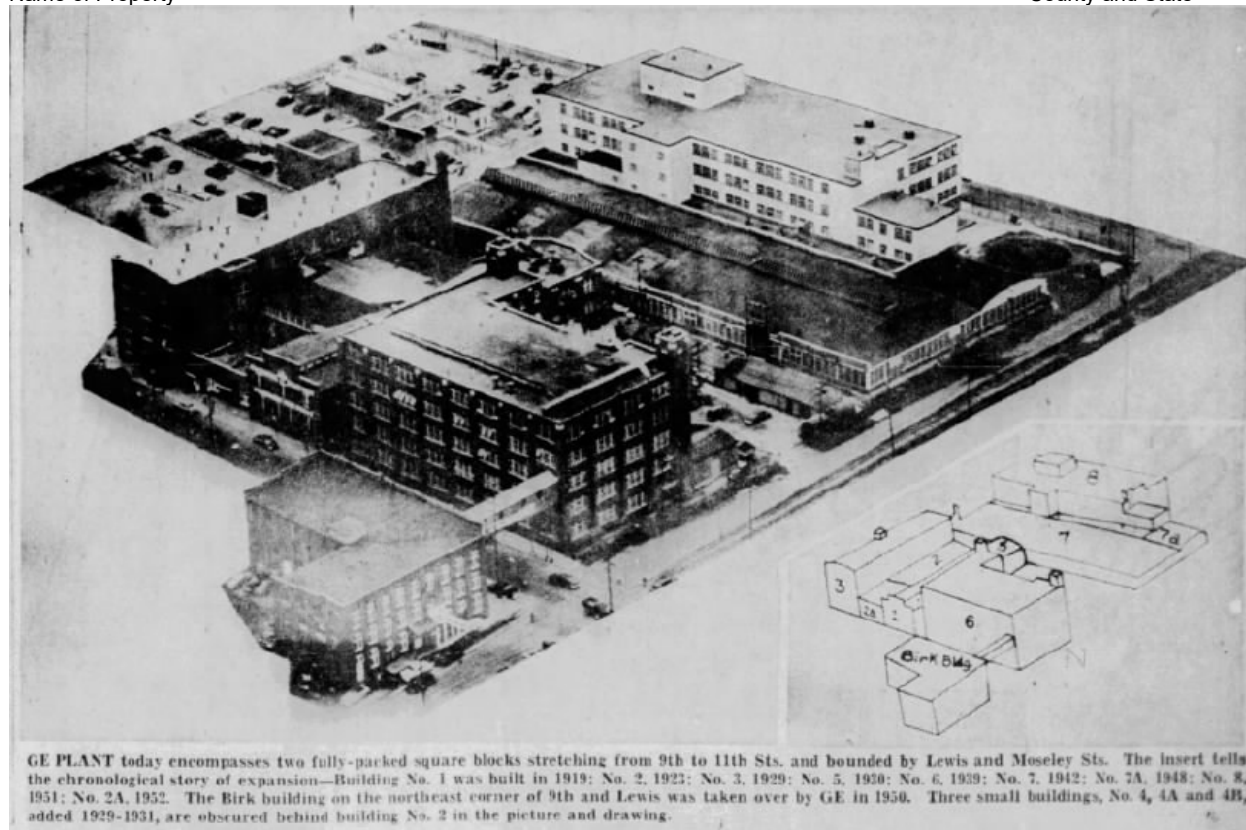
⁶⁸ “Local Factory Makes Helpful Connection,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, June 17, 1926; “Powell Crosley, Jr., Owner of Cincinnati Reds, Spend Thousands of Dollars in Owensboro,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, September 22, 1935.

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GE PLANT today encompasses two fully-packed square blocks stretching from 9th to 11th Sts. and bounded by Lewis and Moseley Sts. The insert tells the chronological story of expansion—Building No. 1 was built in 1919; No. 2, 1923; No. 3, 1929; No. 5, 1930; No. 6, 1939; No. 7, 1942; No. 7A, 1948; No. 8, 1951; No. 2A, 1952. The Birk building on the northeast corner of 9th and Lewis was taken over by GE in 1950. Three small buildings, No. 4, 4A and 4B, added 1929-1931, are obscured behind building No. 2 in the picture and drawing.

**Rendering of Ken-Rad main plant development (Ninth and J. R. Miller)
“Ken-Rad Launched Modern Progress Era,” *Owensboro Messenger*, March 1, 1953**

In 1936, Owensboro’s chamber of commerce lauded Ken-Rad’s production of bulbs and tubes for the global market as “an ultra-modern industry of which Owensboro is justly proud.”⁶⁹ By this time, Ken-Rad’s plant on Ninth and Miller was the “largest plant of its kind in the South.”⁷⁰ On account of this growth, Burlew once more commissioned Hoffman to construct a two-story addition to the rear of the facility that previously housed the lamp division, which had relocated to the vacant cigar plant at Ninth and Bolivar sometime in 1934. This new wing contained a machine shop and furnaces used in the production of the metal tubes.⁷¹ In spring 1937, Hoffman was rushing construction on two more projects with a \$200,000 price tag: a massive 72,000-square-foot, five-story facility for tube production at the corner of Ninth and J. R. Miller (see below), and an 80-by-80-foot extension of the lamp plant on Bolivar.⁷² Architecturally, both edifices featured the same restrained Deco style that Hoffman had first introduced at the main complex in 1929. Promotional postcards depicting these additions celebrated the company as “the South’s only manufacturer of electrical lamp bulbs and radio

⁶⁹ “Sam Levy, C. of C. President, Gives Interesting Radio Talk on Owensboro,” *Owensboro Messenger*, April 8, 1936.

⁷⁰ “D. A.R. Decides to Buy Lineage Books,” *Owensboro Messenger*, March 2, 1935.

⁷¹ “Addition Soon to be Completed at Ken-Rad Plant,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, August 23, 1936.

⁷² “Ken-Rad to Erect Two Buildings to Cost \$200,000”; “Contract Goes to Local Firm,” *Evansville Press*, March 21, 1937; “Begin Excavation,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, April 7, 1937.

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tubes.”⁷³ As Ken-Rad stock prices continued to climb during World War II, the lamp plant received yet another extension to its north elevation in 1944, which required the demolition of two residences.⁷⁴ The company’s economic and physical transformation of the city was not lost on a Dr. Coffman, who offered an address at its annual barbeque that year: “when there wasn’t any Ken-Rad...there wasn’t much Owensboro then, either.”⁷⁵



Photograph of Ken-Rad main tube plant c. 1937 wing (right), April 2026. Photo credit: Jason Schubert

Ken-Rad’s Wartime Expansion in the Ohio River Region

Ken-Rad’s good fortune in the 1930s was but a prelude to its meteoric rise during World War II. In January 1941, its Owensboro plants were employing 2,000, and its officials characterized “the outlook for the coming year” as “unusually bright.”⁷⁶ This prognostication was accurate. By 1942, Ken-Rad’s workforce had swollen to 4,000 and was straining to meet the demand for bulbs and radio tubes. The Signal Corps of the Army and the Navy were particularly keen to boost production of tubes with military applications and was already awarding Ken-Rad defense contracts.⁷⁷ Seeking to capitalize on the good fortune of “one of Kentucky’s most successful industries,” other towns in the state and beyond its borders vied to build “feeder”

⁷³ Ken-Rad Corporation Lamp Plant postcard, Daviess County Public Library, Larry Clark Collection, n.d.

⁷⁴ “Heard About Town,” *Owensboro Messenger*, July 9, 1944; “Ken-Rad to Build,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, November 10, 1944.

⁷⁵ “Ken-Rad Employees Guests of Company at Picnic, Barbecue,” *Owensboro Messenger*, July 30, 1944.

⁷⁶ “Business, Trade, Agricultural Conditions Good,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, January 1, 1941.

⁷⁷ William Foster Hayes, *Sixty Years of Owensboro, 1883-1943* (Owensboro, 1943), 128; “Ken-Rad Awarded \$16,803 War Department Contract,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, October 22, 1941.

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plants in the mid-1940s.⁷⁸ Yet Ken-Rad insisted that at least 2,000 women between the ages of 16 and 40 register as potential workers in each municipality, thereby assuring the company of a deep labor reserve.⁷⁹ With support from Kentucky's lieutenant governor and congressional representatives, Chamber of Commerce president John P. Masters led a massive mobilization drive in Bowling Green.⁸⁰ Papers such as the *Daily News* concurred that Ken-Rad would provide steady employment after the war; in the meantime, "girls and women will not only be afforded a comfortable livelihood but will be doing their part to help defeat the Hun and the Jap."⁸¹ The city directly sponsored this drive through a special advertising fund, while 150 residents transported rural inhabitants of the county to the registration headquarters downtown.⁸²



To left: Photograph of Bowling Green plant published in *Park City Daily News*, September 29, 1943

To right: Advertisement published in *Park City Daily News*, November 22, 1942

Once Bowling Green granted the Navy a 99-year lease to a four-block site, the War Production Board earmarked \$900,000 of a congressional appropriation for the construction of a plant to produce radio and secret ordnance equipment.⁸³ The 80,000-square-foot building was designed by Joseph Holman, who rose to prominence in the Nashville-based firm of Marr and Holman. Seven of their Art Deco and Classical Revival buildings in that city were nominated to the National Register in 1984.⁸⁴ The Bowling Green project took considerably longer than the anticipated three months, but its boosters remained sanguine. For them, the opening of the plant

⁷⁸ "Plans Completed for Registration Here of Women For Employment at Proposed Ken-Rad Plant," *Times-Journal*, November 21, 1942.

⁷⁹ "Ken-Rad Company May Locate Branch Plant Here," *Park City Daily News*, November 19, 1942.

⁸⁰ "Ken-Rad is Coming," *Park City Daily News*, January 21, 1943.

⁸¹ "Let Us Not Muff this Chance," *Park City Daily News*, November 20, 1942.

⁸² "Off to a Good Start," *Park City Daily News*, November 22, 1942; "Location of Ken-Rad Plant Here Seems Assured," *Park City Daily News*, November 25, 1942.

⁸³ "Navy Department Requests Lease of City Owned Plot on West Tenth Street," *Times-Journal*, December 8, 1942; "Approval for Ken-Rad Plant Here Given By Board," *Park City Daily News*, January 20, 1943.

⁸⁴ Philip Thomason and James Draeger, "Marr and Holman Buildings in Downtown Nashville — National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 1984. Holman's Bowling Green plant is not extant.

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heralded nothing less than “a new chapter...in the history of the outstanding industrial achievement in Western Kentucky.”⁸⁵



Photograph of Roy Burlaw and Joseph Holman, May 7, 1943

Bowling Green was not the only community afflicted with Ken-Rad fever. Businessmen pursuing the reindustrialization of Tell City, Indiana, “systematically” persuaded women to register.⁸⁶ They anticipated that

The city that formerly loomed large as a furniture manufacturing and general wood working place will be noted as an industrial town turning out an entirely new product. With the decline of factory employment and the shift to other centers nearer a supply of timber, Tell Citians looked with favor on the approach of Ken-Rad agents. They helped recruit workers to increase the natural attractions.⁸⁷

This campaign was also successful. In February 1943, the Defense Plan Corporation approved a \$1,300,000 war contract for a radio tube plant in Tell City that would employ 1,200.⁸⁸ Holman also designed this sprawling, one-story building; later converted into a GE factory, it has survived but is currently vacant. In addition to the Bowling Green and Tell City feeders, which were funded with federal money, Ken-Rad also leased out facilities in Rockport and

⁸⁵ Lawrence W. Hager, “Owensboro Ken-Rad Plant Established 25 Years Ago,” *Park City Daily News*, September 29, 1943.

⁸⁶ “Silver Lining of the Income Tax,” *Owensboro Messenger*, February 15, 1944.

⁸⁷ W. E. Daniel, “News and Views,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, January 30, 1944.

⁸⁸ “Ken-Rad Given Funds to Build in Tell City,” *Evansville Press*, February 3, 1943.

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Huntingburg, Indiana.⁸⁹ By 1944, the company had clearly evolved into a regional industrial powerhouse and a key contributor to the war effort.

Unionization and Nationalization at the Owensboro Plants

On the face of it, Ken-Rad's fortunes were in the ascendant in the mid-1940s. As its economic empire expanded into neighboring cities and states, the company's annual payroll for around 7,000 employees hit \$4,500,000.⁹⁰ However, this success belied discontent amongst its workers, many of whom advocated with increasing vigor for unionization. Burlew's unwillingness to negotiate with organized labor provoked the federal government, which considered Ken-Rad to be an essential supplier for the military. When relations between the management and the union reached an impasse, President Roosevelt dispatched troops from Fort Knox to seize — and operate — Ken-Rad's plants. This “takeover became one of a handful of cases in which the military's managerial role was real, rather than merely formal.”⁹¹ A fascinating chapter of wartime labor history thus played out in the Owensboro plants.

While mid-century historical scholarship typically lionized private industry's role in America's military triumph, more recent publications have emphasized the persistent fractiousness of the relationship between the government and the business community. These tensions were also present during World War I; while armaments manufacturers reaped immense profits, they also “chafed under many of the wartime measures imposed by the Wilson administration and progressives in Congress.”⁹² As the government championed unions, its agencies ruled against companies like Smith & Wesson that were obstructing labor organizing. When war again erupted in Europe, federal officials elevated the unions “in exchange for what they hoped would be stability and uninterrupted munitions production.”⁹³ The passage of the Wagner Act in 1935, which established the National Labor Relations Board and signaled official support for collective bargaining, undergirded the government's pro-labor position.

To ensure to America's war machine was well-oiled, the Roosevelt administration passed legislation and created several entities to ensure industrial productivity. The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, for instance, allowed the government to issue compulsory orders to companies that neglected to fulfill military contracts. Work stoppages at the Allis-Chalmers plant, which produced motors and ship turbines, then prompted the president to convene a National Defense Mediation Board; after the Pearl Harbor attacks, this agency was replaced by the National War Labor Board (NWLB). As historian Mark Wilson notes, the NWLB settled over 20,000 disputes by the end of the war, and only a handful of these cases resulted in governmental seizures. The Ken-Rad “occupation” in the spring of 1944 was therefore a rarity, one that

⁸⁹ “Ken-Rad Leases Rockport Site,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, March 3, 1944.

⁹⁰ “Ken-Rad Launched Modern Progress Era.”

⁹¹ Mark W. Wilson, *Destructive Creation: American Business and the Winning of World War II* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 220.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 192.

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reflected the centrality of that operation to the war effort and evidenced a broader “unraveling of industrial relations at the national level.”⁹⁴

Rumblings of discontent amongst the Ken-Rad workforce were first audible in 1934, when Hugh Johnson of the National Recovery Association deprived the company of the coveted “Blue Eagle” designation. A controversial figure, Johnson aimed to use the centralized power of his agency to “restrain any trade which involves child labor, unconscionably long hours, and excessively low wages.”⁹⁵ The Blue Eagle award that he innovated in 1933 essentially served as a patriotic marker of fair labor practices. However, his detractors accused him of indirectly “fixing prices” by artificially inflating wages. Ken-Rad ran afoul of the NRA the following year for offering a minimum wage of 15 cents per hour — far less than the 32-40 cents that the electrical manufacturing code recommended. Although negotiations with the NRA yielded a compromise wage of 28 cents, Ken-Rad was also ordered to offer \$30,000 in backpay to its workers before it could reclaim the Blue Eagle.⁹⁶

In August 1942, workers at the Ken-Rad plants assembled on the second floor of the lamp factory for a momentous vote on whether to unionize as an affiliate of United Automobile Workers.⁹⁷ After forming this combination, they wasted no time in agitating for improvements that included 10-cent-per-hour pay increases, 5-cent-per-hour bonuses for night shift workers, one-week vacations, and a maintenance membership clause in their contracts.⁹⁸ A panel of the NLRB assented to these modifications in May 1943; three months later, the full Board granted the workers a 3-cent wage increase for those earning between 50 and 70 cents per hour, set minimum wages at 50 cents per hour, and approved the maintenance of membership clause. As this compromise did not appease either party, the Board took up the matter for reconsideration, while the workers and management returned to the negotiating table. During this period, “the company carried on an intensive educational campaign, stressing the importance of Ken-Rad products in the war, and union leaders emphasized the American Federation of Labor’s ‘no strike’ pledge.”⁹⁹

This dispute took an incendiary turn in the winter of 1944, when the undersecretary of war reneged on granting the prestigious Army-Navy “E” Award to Ken-Rad’s workers in recognition of their contributions to the war effort. Strangely enough, a report of this turnabout in a Sioux Falls paper prompted the *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer* to publish warring editorials in February and March. A critic of organized labor charged “third parties” — ostensibly the UAW — with contacting the War Production Board and dissuading any awards until the labor conflict

⁹⁴ Ibid., 231.

⁹⁵ Charles Merz, “Embattled Blue Eagle; His Story is as Enthusiastic, as Impulsive and as Colorful as His Administration of the NRA,” *The New York Times*, March 31, 1935.

⁹⁶ National Recovery Administration, “Ken-Rad Corp. Of Kentucky to Restore \$30,000 in Back Wages and Win Back Their Blue Eagle,” July 2, 1934, University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lawrence W. Hager papers, Box 97ms501-17, folder 71; “Johnson Orders Blue Eagle Given Back to Ken-Rad,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, June 28, 1934.

⁹⁷ “Ken-Rad Workers Ballot Thursday,” *Owensboro Messenger*, August 9, 1942.

⁹⁸ “Panel Majority Favors Raise At Ken-Rad; Decision Up to WLB,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 7, 1943.

⁹⁹ “Ken-Rad Wage Boost Ok’d by Stabilization Director Vinson,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, March 21, 1944.

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had been resolved.¹⁰⁰ The following week, plant worker Armon Midkiff contended that the postponement of the award was immaterial to his colleagues: “to us the decision of the NWLB means more than the awarding of buttons. After all, we don’t get our evening paper with buttons.”¹⁰¹ Other commentators sarcastically claimed that they would be well off if only they “could eat buttons.”¹⁰²

Staging a defense of Ken-Rad, longtime employee Alex Quirk retorted that 80% of the workers in Midkiff’s own department regretted the loss of the award. Moreover, he charged that only 400 out of the 2,800 union members that the UAW claimed to represent were currently working at Ken-Rad!¹⁰³ Writing again in late March, Quirk continued to fulminate against strike action at the plants. He predicted that a government takeover would curtail weekly working hours from 55 to 40, resulting in a salary reduction of twelve dollars.¹⁰⁴ Quirk also couched his defense of the company as his patriotic duty: “Hitler declared he would defeat us from within but if we can free our country from strikes and defense plant interruption till this war is over we will prove him a liar!” If a labor stoppage occurred, it would render Ken-Rad “a contemptible hole whose workers will be despised by all mothers of boys across the sea.”



As the “E” award controversy pitted workers against middle management, higher-ups in Ken-Rad also found themselves with their feet to the fire. On March 23, the company’s union workers in Owensboro voted 1,938 to 581 to strike and requested a government takeover of the

¹⁰⁰ Julius C. Miller, “The Ken-Rad Award,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 6, 1944.

¹⁰¹ Armon Midkiff, “The Ken-Rad Award,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 13, 1944.

¹⁰² Halive O. Atkinson, “The Ken-Rad Award,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 27, 1944.

¹⁰³ Alex J. Quirk, “The Ken-Rad Award,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 20, 1944; Alex J. Quirk, “The Ken-Rad Award,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, March 5, 1944.

¹⁰⁴ Alex J. Quirk, “Urges Ken-Raders Vote ‘No,’” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, March 21, 1944

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plants.¹⁰⁵ The compensation conflict certainly contributed to this action, but the union also accused Ken-Rad of violating a “non-wage provision” agreement that it had assented to in February.¹⁰⁶ The following day, the NWLB summoned Ken-Rad officials to explain why they had failed to comply with the wage directive issued the previous July. Burlew and his colleagues contended that Ken-Rad simply could not afford the increase — which would have impacted the salaries of 3,100 of its 4,000 employees — and insisted that many of its workers commuted from rural areas with a lower cost of living.¹⁰⁷ The NWLB was not convinced by this rationalization. Acting swiftly, President Roosevelt instructed the secretary of war to directly administer Ken-Rad’s main plants in Owensboro and its feeders elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, he ordered the secretary of the Navy to seize Jenkins Brothers, a rubber manufacturer based in Bridgeport, Connecticut, that similarly had failed to heed the NWLB’s wage increase orders. The Ken-Rad confiscation also dovetailed with another bold assertion of federal power: Roosevelt’s takeover of the Montgomery Ward department store chain, which stemmed from his long-simmering conflict with its anti-union president, Sewell L. Avery.¹⁰⁹ The confluence of these atypical direct seizures created a firestorm in the press. The *Owensboro Inquirer* printed reports on the Montgomery Ward and Ken-Rad occupations in adjoining columns, thereby giving the impression that Roosevelt’s administration was running amok.¹¹⁰

Dispatched from Fort Knox to Owensboro, Colonel Carroll Badeau assumed control of Ken-Rad on April 14 with a small team and posted notices broadcasting the president’s intent “to operate or arrange for the operation of such plants and facilities in such a manner as he deems necessary for the successful prosecution of the war.” In his own correspondence, Badeau clarified that “the Army’s purpose in taking over the operation of these plants is to see that our armed forces get the equipment and supplies required for scheduled operations. We will keep possession only so long as it is necessary to accomplish this mission.”¹¹¹ But critics doubted Badeau’s pledge that his tenure at Ken-Rad would be a brief one. Writing to the *Owensboro Inquirer* from Minneapolis, one of the company’s distributors concluded that Badeau’s letter “should be quite amazing to the average freedom loving American,” as it “furnishes a rather concrete example of bureaucracy on the rampage.”¹¹² This critic further resented “with every ounce of [his] energy that constant moving in and control that the executive branch of our government seems to be constantly taking on industry of all kinds.” Clearly, the Ken-Rad saga was precipitating a wider critique of Roosevelt’s aggressive tactics.

¹⁰⁵ “Ken-Rad Workers Favor Work Stoppage; Vote 1,938 to 581,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, March 23, 1944.

¹⁰⁶ “Ken-Rad Workers to Ballot in Labor Disputes Act Election,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, March 17, 1944.

¹⁰⁷ “Ken-Rad Case Referred to President by War Labor Board,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, April 7, 1944.

¹⁰⁸ “FDR Orders Army to Take Over Ken-Rad Plants Here,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, April 14, 1944.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson, 220.

¹¹⁰ “Ken-Rad Case Being Heard in Louisville,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, April 27, 1944.

¹¹¹ “Suit Filed in U. S. Court Asks Property Return,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, April 16, 1944.

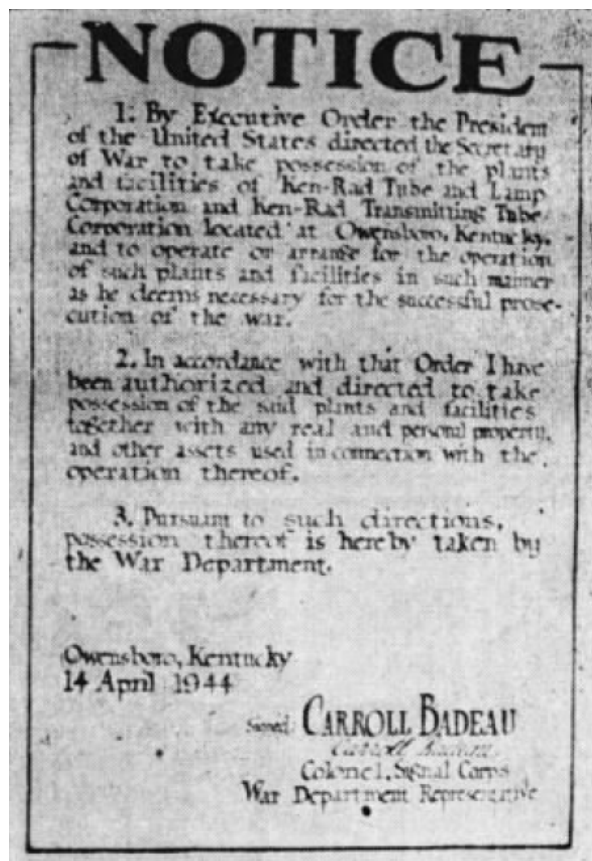
¹¹² “Ken-Rad Dealer in Minnesota Writes Senators, Congressmen,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 4, 1944.

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Ken-Rad's leadership immediately went to the courts to seek relief. Burlaw and his colleagues argued that the NWLB was only empowered to mediate and had overstepped its purview by (incorrectly) deeming Ken-Rads wages "substandard."¹¹³ Ken-Rad also balked at paying full wages to "inexperienced beginners" after only six weeks, as this innovation threatened to disrupt "the entire sound and tested wage-rate structure developed in the plants over many years." Moreover, Ken-Rad challenged the NWLB's ability to order retroactive wage increases amounting to \$1,250,000 and represented this demand as an illegal taking in contravention of the Fifth Amendment. But this reasoning failed to sway Judge Mac Winford, who declared that he was unable to interfere with the NWLB's order. The editorial board of the *Owensboro Inquirer* took issue with that decision, which "leaves unsettled the doubt existing in the minds of thousands of Owensboroans as to the necessity for such a dramatic step as Army occupation of the Ken-Rad properties."¹¹⁴ As Mark Wilson plainly puts it, Winford's ruling turned "out to be the most sweeping court endorsement of presidential seizure power."¹¹⁵ With no legal leg to stand on, Ken-Rad acquiesced and renewed negotiations with the union. The outcome was a compromise that fixed the minimum wage at forty cents, extended the lower-wage "learning period" to 84 days, and granted back pay only to workers currently in Ken-Rad's

¹¹³ "Suit Filed in U. S. Court Asks Property Return."

¹¹⁴ "The Decision in the Ken-Rad Case," *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 12, 1944.

¹¹⁵ Wilson, 220.

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employ.¹¹⁶ On May 25, 1944, Burlew returned to the plants with great pomp and circumstance, as “My Old Kentucky Home” blared over the factories’ PA systems.¹¹⁷



Owensboro Inquirer, May 26, 1944

The takeover presaged the end of Burlew’s career, as he soon after sold the Ken-Rad tube division to General Electric in January 1945.¹¹⁸ GE retained former Ken-Rad executive Carl Hollatz to oversee this operation. Six months later, Westinghouse acquired the lamp plant in an effort “to meet existing war time demands and to provide increased capacity for post-war production.”¹¹⁹ Ken-Rad — which technically remained incorporated until 1953 — received \$6,500,000 from these transactions. The Owensboro papers emphasized that Burlew was selling off the company’s tangible assets at a high point in its history. Ken-Rad was an enterprise that had been

operating profitably for many years and whose products were well and favorably known from coast to coast – even around the world. They attained that status under the guiding genius of Mr. Burlew who has contributed more to the industrial development of Owensboro than anyone in all the history of this community.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ “‘Business as Usual’ Is Order Of Day At Ken-Rad Plants,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 26, 1944; “Initial Payments of Retroactive Wages Are Made to the First of 6,000 Ken-Rad Workers,” *Owensboro Messenger*, June 16, 1944.

¹¹⁷ “Ken-Rad Plants Returned to Company,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, May 25, 1944.

¹¹⁸ “Ken-Rad Tube Business, Plants to Pass to G. E.,” *Owensboro Inquirer*, January 2, 1945.

¹¹⁹ “Westinghouse Buys Ken-Rad Lamp Plant,” *Owensboro Messenger*, June 10, 1945.

¹²⁰ “Welcome to Owensboro, Westinghouse!” *Owensboro Inquirer*, June 12, 1945.

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Soon, Westinghouse was increasing production and seeking additional male employees with experience in adjusting and operating the lamp equipment.¹²¹ The company remained at the Bolivar street location until 1973, when it relocated to a 145,000-square-foot warehouse in an Owensboro industrial park that it had purchased from the Texas Gas Transmission Corp.¹²²



Photograph of Westinghouse (former Ken-Rad) plant, 1960s

University of Kentucky Special Collections, Lawrence w. Hager Papers, 97ms501, box 45, item 120

Evaluating the History of the American Cigar Company/Ken-Rad Lamp Plant within the Historic Context: The Second Industrial Revolution in Owensboro, Kentucky, 1870-1960

Both the nation's leading cigar manufacturer and the region's primary producer of lightbulbs utilized the plant at Ninth and Bolivar from 1919 to 1945. Struggling to attract laborers to its Seven Hills facility, the American Cigar Company rented this building from the prominent contractor Leo Monarch, whose family had pioneered Owensboro's distilling industry. For most of the 1920s, the workforce employed there exceeded that at the ACC's Paducah and Louisville installations. Operations at the plant facilitated the transformation of the cigar manufacturing industry, as the ACC undermined the traditional mode and culture of production by employing lower-paid women and producing cheaper goods in bulk with aid of new

¹²¹ "Westinghouse Names Tucker Manager of Recently Bought Ken-Rad Plant," *Owensboro Messenger*, July 8, 1945; "Wanted at Ken-Rad Lamp Division," *Owensboro Messenger*, July 22, 1945.

¹²² George Kerler, "Area firm shifts site, adds jobs," *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, February 24, 1973; "\$2.2 million paid Texas Gas by Westinghouse for KE site," *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, April 3, 1973.

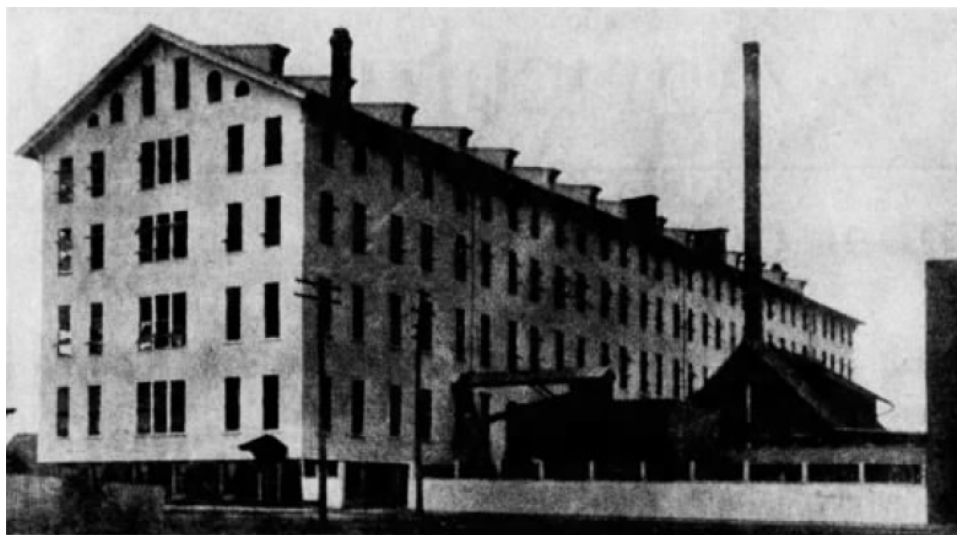
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machinery. Although the ACC ceased operations in Owensboro in 1930, it returned to the city in 1956 and repurposed the American Tobacco Company's stemmery at the intersection of Walnut Street and the L&N Railroad. The massing of this building was significantly reduced during its conversion into a shopping mall in the later twentieth century. While the ACC's Louisville facility has been demolished, the Paducah plant at Eleventh and Jefferson still stands and could be eligible for National Register listing as well. More broadly, the ACC plant at Ninth and Bolivar is a rare physical link to the history of tobacco production and processing in Owensboro, as no stemmery building has survived. The A. C. Tompkins tobacco factory, which was the largest stemmery in the city, was demolished in 1972.¹²³



**Nineteenth-century photograph of ATC stemmery on Walnut Street (not extant)
"County's settlers planted corn, tobacco," *Messenger-Inquirer*, June 6, 1976**

In its heyday, the Ken-Rad Tube & Lamp Corporation was not only the largest producer of light bulbs in the South, but also the second (or third) largest supplier of radio tubes in the world.¹²⁴ As the statement of significance demonstrates, the federal government considered the company to be such a vital contributor to the war effort that it staged an atypical, complete takeover of its operations during a labor dispute in 1944. On a national level, the Ken-Rad Lamp Plant may be compared to the Oakland Lamp Works that was placed on the National Register in 2015 or even the General Electric Research Laboratory in Schenectady, New York, which was elevated to the status of National Historic Landmark in 1975.¹²⁵

While the American Cigar Company and Ken-Rad were national leaders in their respective industries, the plant's history also speaks to the myriad tensions that the Second Industrial Revolution unleashed. This site witnessed the transition from artisanal to unskilled labor, the mechanization of production processes, corporatization, wartime mobilizations, and the labor-management strife that accompanied these jolting transitions. Technological "progress"

¹²³ "Owensboro 'Stemmery': Its Era Past, Building Follows," *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, March 16, 1972.

¹²⁴ "Housing to be Discussed at Today's Session," *Owensboro Messenger*, September 26, 1941.

¹²⁵ James Sheire, "General Electric Research Laboratory — National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form," 1975.

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may have driven Owensboro's runaway industrialization, but this advancement came with a human cost that demands further recognition.

Evaluation of Integrity

The American Cigar Company/Ken-Rad Lamp Plant evidences each of the seven types of integrity that cumulatively are vital to its listing on the National Register. It remains at its original **location**, flanked by Ninth, Bolivar, and two alleys. Monarch's choice to develop this land was a strategic one, it was one of the few vacant parcels along the rapidly industrializing Ninth Street corridor. The plant's **setting** is also intact, as it is surrounded by early-twentieth-century, single-family housing on three elevations. Its somewhat incongruous proximity to a low density, residential subdivision was actually a boon, as Ken-Rad was able to purchase two smaller, adjoining houses in 1944 to accommodate an expansion. The warehouse that faces the plant's facade appears to date to the mid-twentieth century.

The plant conforms to its original **design** within the Period of Significance, which includes additions in 1937, 1944, and 1946. The type of construction and the materials used in each building campaign reflect the industry occurring within the plant at each stage. The steel framed, open concept expansions, for instance, accommodated the installation of bulb-producing machinery and the vehicles that transported these finished goods. The c. 1946 restroom block and the remnants of the advanced ventilation system installed at that time also reflect the fraught history of labor relations at the plant, as Westinghouse intended to mollify the workers — many of whom it had drawn from the Ken-Rad ranks — with these concessions. The plant has not received any contemporary extensions.

In terms of **materials**, the brick exterior of each section is remarkably intact; four pilasters near its northwest corner have decayed, and three of these have been covered with protective metal sheathing. The most noticeable alterations have affected the original building's fenestrations. Originally, each window on the first and second stories of the west elevation consisted of two six-over-six pane wood sashes, with three-over-three sashes at the basement level. Fragments of these remain, but most of the windows are currently only outfitted with aluminum storms and have been covered with removable metal panels for the safety of passersby. Additionally, eighteen of the segmental-arched windows were filled in with brick and glass block after the period of significance. The brick arches above, however, are still present, and the current owner intends to restore these windows to their original appearance. On the east elevation, three segmental-arched windows on the first story were replaced by a loading dock and separate door. Again, the brick arch over the door is still intact, and this missing window could be replaced. Remarkably, the fixed, metal sash windows on the building's 1937 and 1944 additions are all intact, apart from one unit on the west elevation. The owner also intends to refurbish these units. Materially, the condition of the plant is comparable to that of the nearby Kentucky Buggy Company building when it was nominated to the National Register in 2015.

While the interior of the building has suffered some deterioration, it has not undergone any major modernization. Its original wood and steel support systems are intact, as is its concrete (basement) and wood flooring. The 1930s' freestanding, circular wash basins are even still

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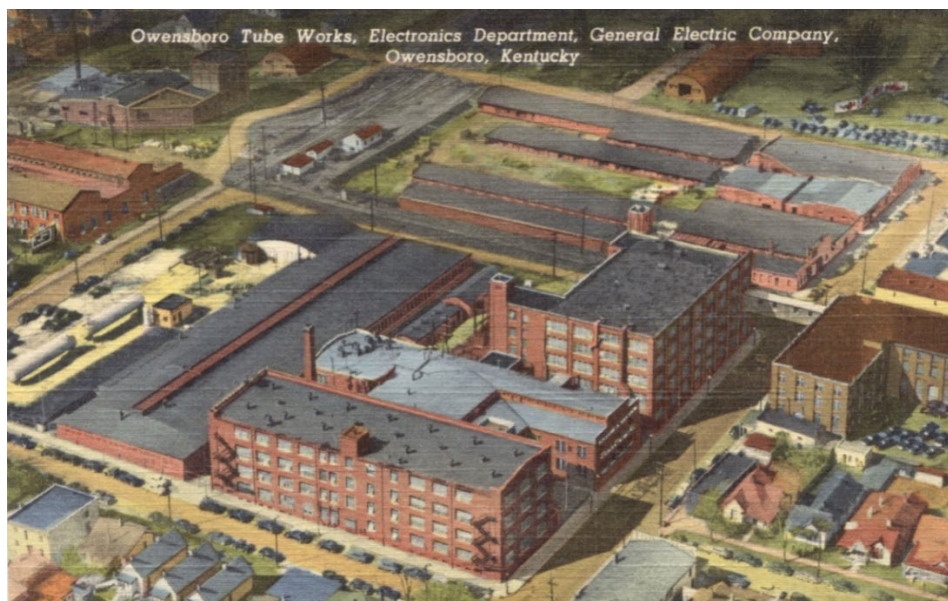
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present in the employee restrooms. Recently, a small fire on the primary level of the 1937 addition resulted in minor cosmetic damage but did not harm the structure. The building's commendable **workmanship** is apparent, as it was clearly constructed to support intensive industrial operations. This nearly untouched, mothballed condition affirms the building's integrity of **feeling** and **association**; entering the premises is almost transportive. The Ken-Rad and Westinghouse "ghost signs" on the plant's primary and east elevations further broadcast its association with these important entities.

In its previous iteration as the Kentucky Electrical Lamp Company, Ken-Rad was based in the Smith Machine Company Building, which was demolished in 2002. Between 1919 and 1934, Ken-Rad's lamp division was located at its primary campus at Ninth and J. R. Miller Boulevard; those buildings still stand, although the facades of the oldest sections abutting Ninth were noticeably altered in the later twentieth century through fenestration changes and new construction buildouts. In contrast, the physical fabric of the plant at Ninth and Bolivar most clearly reflects the events that transpired during its Period of Significance.



GE (former Ken-Rad) tube plant postcard, Daviess County Public Library, Larry Clark Collection, c. 1950s

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency

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Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DAOB 1046

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.95337466 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.768377 Longitude: -87.104475

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Ken-Rad Lamp Plant
Name of Property

Daviess, KY
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

The property line begins at the northeast corner of the intersection of E. Ninth and Bolivar and runs north along Bolivar 326.8 feet to an alley. It proceeds east along that alley 127.5 feet, returns 326.8 feet south to E. Ninth, and then runs 127.5 feet west to the point of beginning.



Boundary Justification

This description is provided in the most recent property deed and encompasses the entirety of the plant. The parameters of this parcel have not changed since 1941. No ancillary buildings were constructed outside of the demarcated area.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dr. Zak Leonard
organization: Blue Grass for Historic Preservation
street & number: 201 N Mill
city or town: Lexington state: Kentucky zip code: 40507
e-mail: zleonard@bluegrasstrust.org
telephone: 781-330-9853
date: April 13, 2026

Ken-Rad Lamp Plant

Name of Property

Daviess, KY

County and State

Photographs--Photo Log

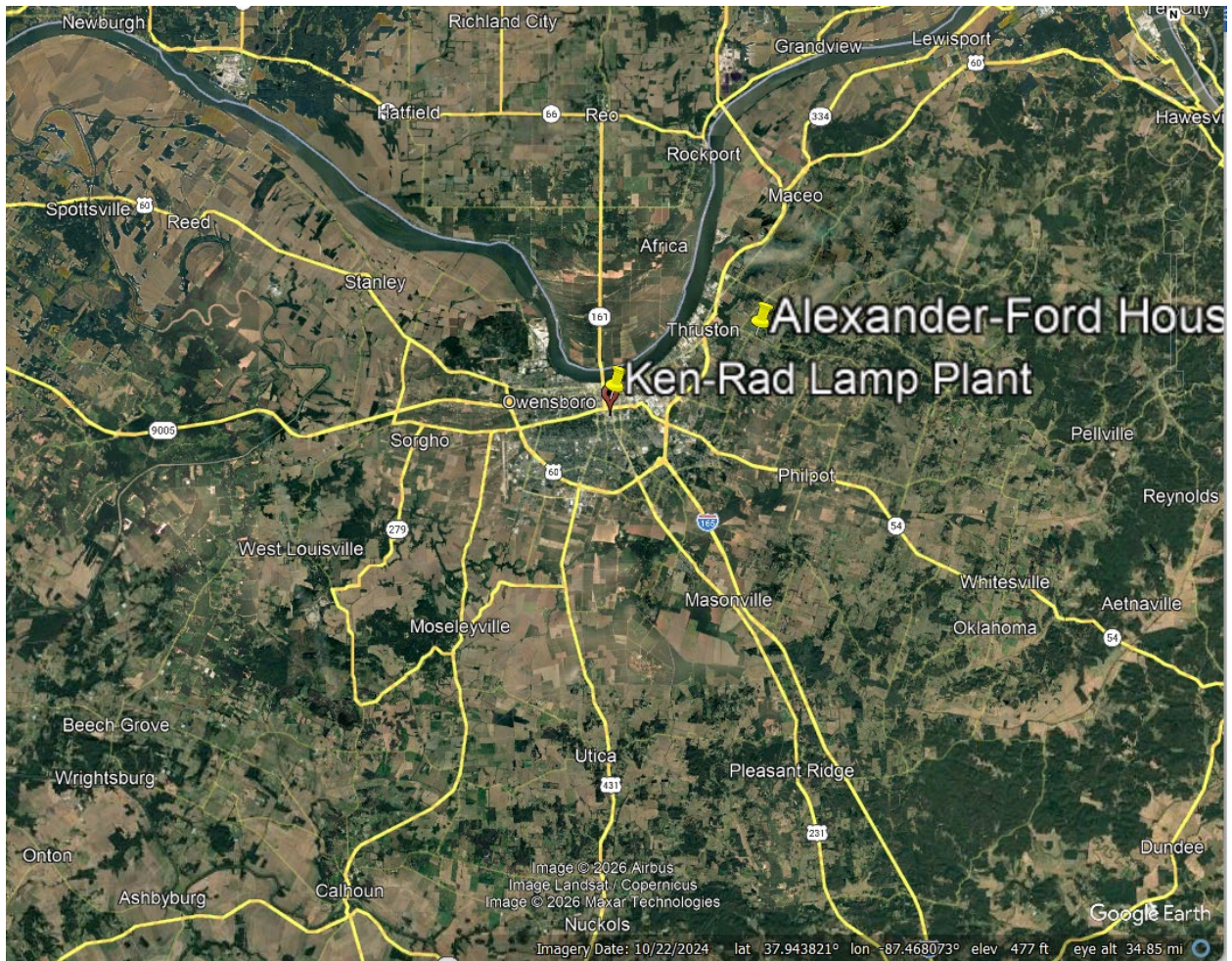
Name of Property: Ken-Rad Lamp Plant
City or Vicinity: Owensboro, KY
County: Daviess
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Zak Leonard
Date Photographed: February 4, 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_001): View of Ken-Rad Plant façade, facing north
- 2 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_002): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building and 1937 addition west elevations, facing southeast
- 3 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_003): View of Ken-Rad Plant north and west elevations, facing southeast
- 4 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_004): View of Ken-Rad Plant 1944 addition, east elevation, facing west
- 5 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_005): View of Ken-Rad Plant 1937 addition east elevation and 1944 addition south elevation, facing northwest
- 6 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_006): View of Ken-Rad plant original building east elevation and 1944/1946 additions south elevation, facing northwest
- 7 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_007): View of Ken-Rad Plant east and south elevations, facing northwest
- 8 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_008): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building basement, facing northwest
- 9 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_009): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building first floor, facing south
- 10 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_010): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building first floor, facing northwest
- 11 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_011): View of Ken-Rad Plant 1944 addition second floor, (linked to original building first floor) facing northwest
- 12 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_0012): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building second floor, facing south
- 13 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_0013): View of Ken-Rad Plant original building second floor, facing north
- 14 of 14 (KY_Daviess_Ken-RadPlant_0014): View of Ken-Rad Plant 1944 addition third floor, facing northwest

Ken-Rad Lamp Plant
Name of Property

Daviess, KY
County and State



Location of Ken-Rad Lamp Plant within large area map.