

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**P1. Resource Name: Dale Brothers Coffee Can Sign**

**\*P2. Location: \*a. County:** Fresno

**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad:** Fresno South 1963, Photorevised 1981

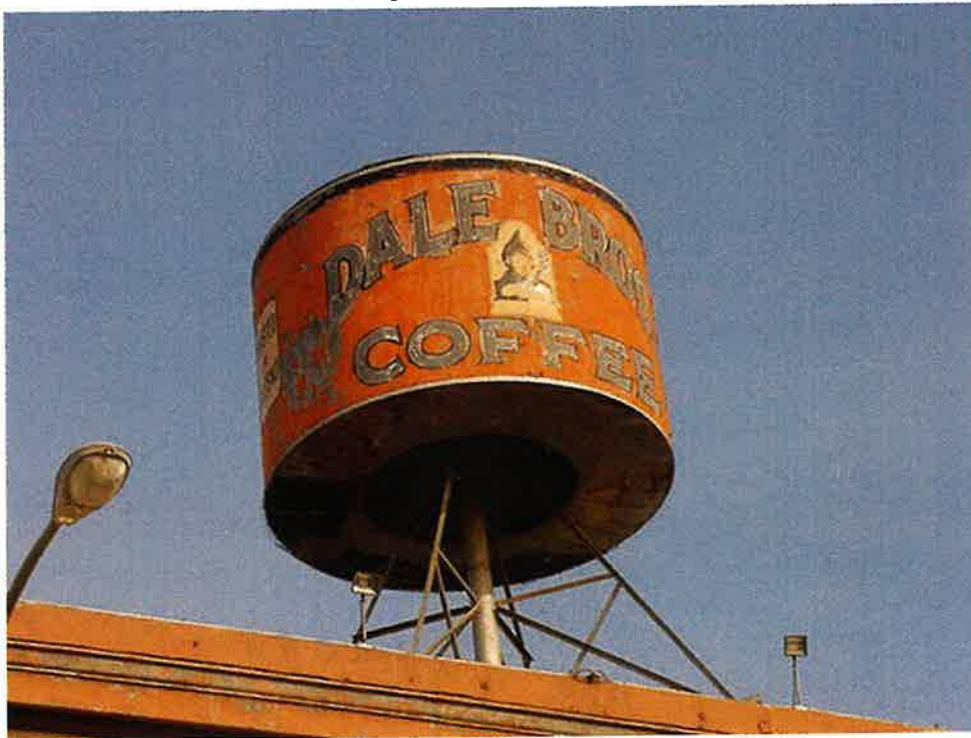
**c. Address:** 1420 H Street

**d. Assessor's Parcel Number:** 466-205-11

**\*P3a. Description:** Standing atop the former Benham Ice Cream/Dale Brothers Coffee Building at 1420 H Street is the sign for Dale Brothers Coffee. The round sheet metal sign is a copy of the can and logo used by the company pre-World War II. Apparently the brick red coffee can depicts a "legendary Ethiopian shepherd Mohammed, who discovered coffee when he noticed how wide awake his sheep remained after eating the red coffee beans" (Hansen 1991:25). The sign also includes "Roasted in Fresno."

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP26 (Freestanding sign)

**\*P4. Resources Present:** ● Object ● Other (Contributor to a proposed historic building)



**P5b Photo date:** May 24, 2004

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** c1937 (date building purchased by Dale Brothers Coffee)

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**  
Matthew Maroot  
1420 H Street  
Fresno, CA 93721

**\*P8. Recorded by:**  
Karana Hattersley-Drayton  
Historic Preservation Project  
Manager, City of Fresno

**\*P9. Date Recorded:**  
May 24, 2004

**\*P10. Survey Type:**  
Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** Evaluation of Dale Brothers Coffee Can Sign 1420 H Street, for the Local Register of Historic Resources.

**\*Attachments:** ● Building, Structure and Object Report

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*NRHP Status Code: 5S3

\*Resource Name: Dale Brothers Coffee Can Sign

**B3. Original Use:** Commercial Sign

**B4. Present Use:** "Non-conforming" sign

\*B5. **Architectural Style:** Commercial vernacular

\*B6. **Construction History:** The sign was presumably designed and constructed circa 1937 after Dale Brothers purchased the former Benham Ice Cream Building at 1420 H Street.

\*B7. **Moved?** ☒ **Unknown** **Date:** **Original Location:**

\*B8. **Related Features:** The sign is a contributing element to the former Benham Ice Cream/Dale Brothers Coffee Building at 1420 H Street. This building has been nominated to the Local Register of Historic Resources.

**B9a. Architect:** N/A

**B9b. Builder:** Unknown

\*B10. **Significance: Theme:** Commerce

**Area:** Fresno

**Period of Significance:** 1937-1955

**Property Type:** Heritage Sign

**Applicable Criteria:** i (Local commerce and industry) and iii (unique style, design and sign type)

The Dale Brothers Coffee Company purchased the former Benham Ice Cream company plant building at 1420 H in 1937. The history of the company as prepared by architectural historian John Edward Powell is as follows: "Founded by Joseph Hayes Dale (1887-1972), Dale Brothers began as a partnership of Joe Dale and his twin brothers Court and Wade, after a grocery store they operated in Tonapah, Nevada, was destroyed by fire in 1915. An earlier store that Joe Dale had operated in Los Angeles with another brother, Ned, was the beginning of the Safeway chain. The Fresno coffee (and then peanut) roasting business carrying the Dale name began in a Van Ness Avenue location during the mid-teens, before expanding to the H Street property. The firm grew to hold 80% of the commercial Coffee accounts in the San Joaquin Valley" (John Edward Powell 1994). Dale Brothers Coffee was a blend of beans from 11 countries and was "highly regarded."

During the 1950s and 1960s the Dale Brothers Coffee sign revolved and was illuminated by green and white neon, serving as a helpful beacon to motorists on Highway 99 (Hansen 1991:25). The coffee roasting business was sold shortly after Joe Dale's death in 1972, however the sign has remained an important landmark for Downtown Fresno to this day.

Both the sign as well as the building at 1420 H Street have been previously evaluated and found eligible to the Local Register in the Ratkovich Plan Survey of 1994. A 2004 survey by Architectural Resources Group for the proposed Broadway Row project also found the building complex at 1420-32 to be eligible to the California and Local Registers. The Dale Brothers Coffee Can sign is both individually eligible for listing on the Local Register of Historic Resources and is also a contributor to the former Benham Ice Cream/Dale Brothers Coffee Building on which the sign still stands.

\*B12. **References:** "Dale Brothers Coffee Can," in Doug Hansen, Fresno Sketchbook 1991:25; John Edward Powell, "Historic Resources Inventory for the Benham Ice Cream/Dale Brothers Coffee Building," Ratkovich Plan, 1994; Michael J. Auer, "The Preservation of Historic Signs," Preservation Briefs 25, October 1991; "City of Fresno Broadway Row Historical Resource Survey," April 2, 2004.

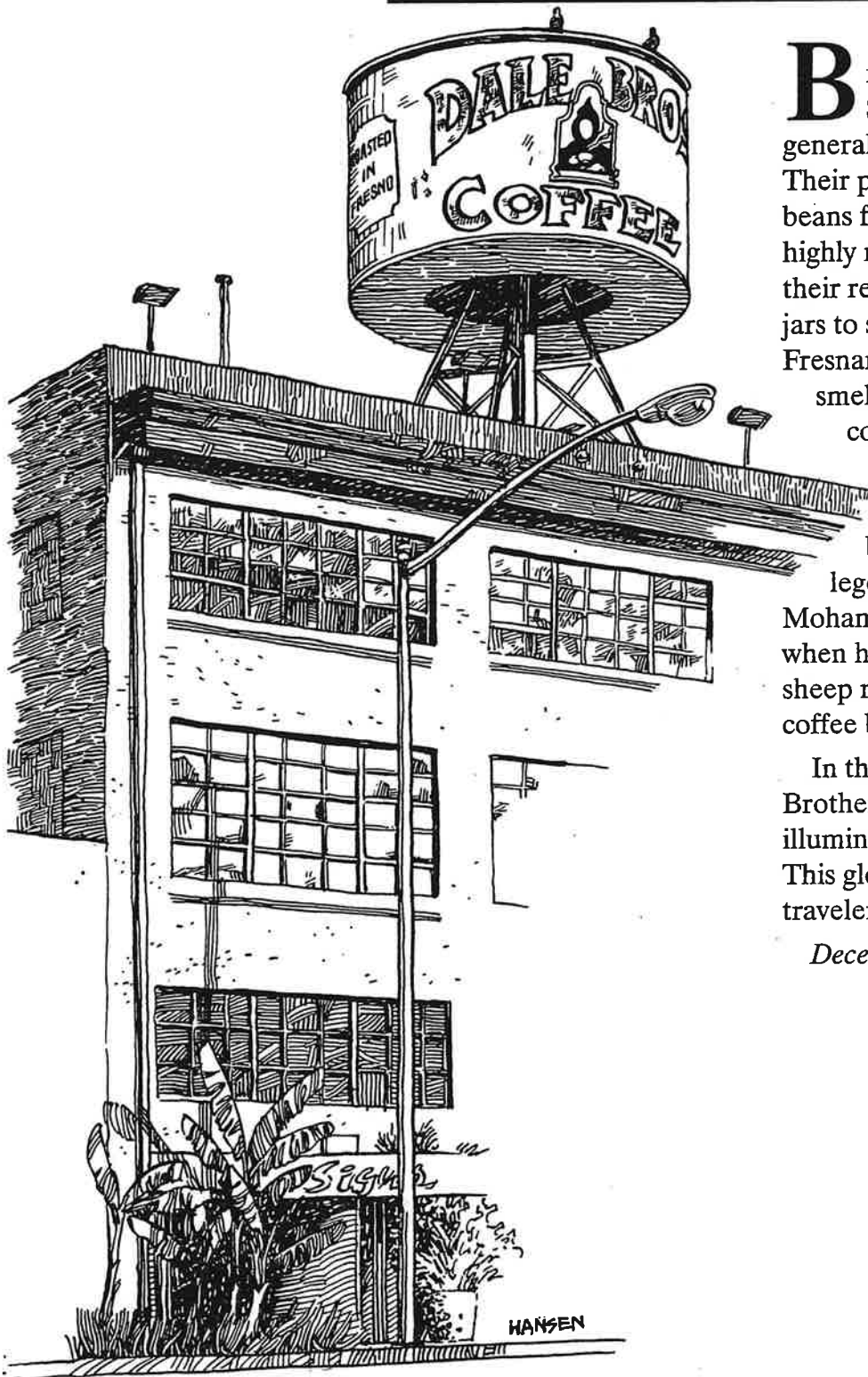
\*B14. **Evaluator:** Karana Hattersley-Drayton

\*Date of Evaluation: August 17, 2004

(This space reserved for official comments.)



## Dale Brothers Coffee can



**B**rothers Wade Dale and Joe Dale Sr. left Nevada and opened a general store in Fresno around 1918. Their popular coffee was a blend of beans from 11 countries and was always highly regarded. During World War II, their red cans were replaced by glass jars to save metal. From 1936 to 1973, Fresno's downtown could enjoy the smell of roasting coffee beans coming from the Dale family business at 1420 H St.

The hooded man on the brick red can represents a legendary Ethiopian shepherd Mohammed, who discovered coffee when he noticed how wide awake his sheep remained after eating the red coffee berries.

In the 1950s and '60s the Dale Brothers Coffee can revolved and was illuminated by green and white neon. This glowing beacon could be seen by travelers on Highway 99.

*December 2, 1990*

*Jeffrey Dale is a grandson of Joe Dale Sr. and now runs a business called Coffee Break Service. He had many great stories about the family coffee business. My favorite involves the big "Treasure Hunt" promotions that KYNO radio ran in the early '60s. Thousands of dollars were buried somewhere in Fresno and KYNO broadcast clues to guide the treasure seekers. One clue hinted that the map to the treasure could be found buried at a spot that was faced by the "monk" on the Dale Brothers Coffee can.*

*Persons unknown had stopped the rotating can so as to afford a clue. Owner Joe Dale Jr. was not amused at this interference and had his engineering department create fake treasure maps that showed the money was buried under KYNO's radio tower. The zealous treasure hunters were fooled by the dummy maps and nearly dug up the tower in a mad search for the money.*