

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



957

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Castner - Knott Building

other names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number 616 - 618 Church Street

NA  not for publication

city or town Nashville

NA  vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Davidson

code 037

zip code 37219

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Hager  
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/29/99  
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Carol D Shull

8-20-99

Castner - Knott Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, Tennessee  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing                      Noncontributing

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

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS  
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Art Moderne  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
walls BRICK and glazed BRICK  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Rubber  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other Copper; granite  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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**

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1906 - 1959

**Significant Dates**

1906

1911

1958-1959

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

618 Church: McArdle, M.T (arc.) & Selden - Breck (bldr)  
1958 renovation: Marr and Holman

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Castner - Knott Building  
Name of Property

Davidson County, Tennessee  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .47 acres

Nashville West 308 NE

#### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 519600 4001780  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Manuel Zeitlin, Architect  
organization Manuel Zeitlin Architects date March 1999  
street & number 1819 21st Avenue South telephone 615/256-2880  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37212

#### Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

##### Continuation Sheets

##### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

##### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

##### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Adventure III Properties, c/o Michael D. Shmerling  
street & number 1900 Church Street telephone 615/320-9800  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37203

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Castner - Knott Building consists of two five story buildings located on Church Street in downtown Nashville. The building at 616 Church Street was completed in 1911 and the building at 618 Church Street was completed in 1906. The buildings were first connected in 1933 at two upper floors when these levels were leased by Castner - Knott from Armstrong's, who had recently purchased the building from B.H. Stief. This additional space was required to keep up with the needs of a successful, growing department store. In 1958-1959, the buildings were connected at all levels and a new corner entry was created at the corner of Capitol Boulevard and Church Street. The original transom windows at storefronts along Church Street had previously been covered by a remodeling and were again covered by polished granite panels as part of the 1958 renovation. The 1950s renovations, including the granite storefront, corner entry at Church Street and Capitol Boulevard and interior modifications, were designed in response to major changes in the retail business in Nashville at that time. In order to keep up with competition in the central shopping area and suburban retail expansion, Castner - Knott undertook this major modernization program.

As the retail market continued to change in the city and county, there were new changes to the buildings. The most visible was the cladding of the buildings with aluminum on a steel framework that occurred circa 1979. During the last six months the aluminum cladding was removed. In addition, paint removal on the 616 Church Street building was completed in conformance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

The Castner - Knott Building has low sloped roofs, concealed by parapets along each street front. Utilities enter the building underground and mechanical equipment is on the roof at the low portion of the sloped roof concealed by parapets. The building was found to be in fair condition with occasional damage caused by water penetration that occurred between the time Castner - Knott closed its doors in 1996 and when it was purchased for rehabilitation by the current owner in 1998.

A description of each building follows:

### 616 Church Street

The exterior wall material of 616 Church Street is buff colored brick with red and black accent panels. Pilasters have limestone bases and capitals. The original storefront openings have limestone bases and the upper windows have stone sills. All of the window frames and trim are painted wood.

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The facades of the building consist of three window-bays of double-hung sashes along Church Street with nine bays of single, double- and triple-wide double-hung windows along Capitol Boulevard. Bays are separated by brick pilasters, some with decorative capitals. The double-hung windows are topped by transom windows at the second floor level. A section of the granite 1958 storefront façade designed by Marr and Holman, Architects is along Church Street and returns for two bays along Capitol Boulevard. All except one of the remaining original storefront windows along Capitol Boulevard were bricked up in the 1950s. Historical photographs, as well as remaining sections of original mullions (not visible from the exterior), indicate that the original storefront picture windows were topped by transom windows to align with mullion divisions at the upper floor windows above. Vertical brick bands along the top of the 616 Church Street building wall indicate the position of the original cornice brackets, removed during a circa 1979 "facelift". The more ornate detailing of this cornice (seen in attached photos) reflects its original use as the B.H. Stief Jewelry Store. The existing parapet at 616 Church Street is capped by 1950s concrete coping.

The first story features the corner entry at Church Street and Capitol Boulevard, with a secondary entry along Capitol Boulevard, midway back along the block. The original canopy support brackets are visible at this original Capitol Boulevard side entrance. Walls and ceilings have the original plaster with original steel beams enclosed in painted wood panel trim centered between each window bay along the Capitol Boulevard side. The floors were built over with sloped plywood flooring in 1958 to provide a transition to the 618 Church Street building. The first floor has an approximately sixteen foot ceiling height.

Upper floors were covered with plywood and vinyl flooring which have now been removed to expose the original poplar tongue and groove flooring. This was done on all floors except at the second floor where asbestos was discovered between layers. The upper floor elevations align with the 618 Church Street building at all connection locations. Plaster ceilings at the upper floors were damaged due to water penetration, although the plaster walls remain largely intact. Original window trim is intact with the exception of sills that were cut when windows were covered by display fixtures. There is one original sill remaining on the third floor that can be used as a pattern for replacement. The stairs have original wood treads, currently covered by rubber treads. Ceiling height on the upper floors is approximately twelve feet.

## 618 Church Street

The typical floor in this section plan is an open loft plan divided into column-bays and surrounded by windows along Church Street and Seventh Avenue. All floors connect to 616 Church Street, resulting in access to the additional windows along Capitol Boulevard.

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The Church Street facade is organized into a street level band of large storefront windows, circa 1958, with the four stories above composed of tripartite casement and picture windows topped by transom windows at all levels. Many of the windows contain original rippled glass. Windows at the second story level have paneled steel sills. There are five window bays along Church Street, seven window-bays along Seventh Avenue and the freight elevator bay. The majority of storefront windows along Seventh Avenue were bricked-in circa 1958. The dominant material on the exterior is white glazed brick. The building is crowned by a painted copper cornice. Painted window trim has been covered since the 1950s.

Key interior features of the 618 Church Street building include twelve to sixteen foot high ceilings, original painted pressed tin ceilings on the first through fourth floors, aged poplar floors now visible where vinyl asbestos tile has been removed on the second through fourth floors (and a portion of the fifth floor), plaster walls, a metal 1950s railing at the mezzanine level, and earlier railings visible inside the original stairwell. Existing doors at the northwest stair are sliding metal-clad counterweighted doors. The building is itself an architecturally interesting representation of a transitional structural system. Its steel post and beam framing system with 2 X 16 floor framing between steel beams signifies the crossover from wood to steel construction taking place at the turn of the century. In 1975 a narrow one and two story storage area was added at the back of the store.

## Renovation Concept

The approach being taken in the renovation of the Castner - Knott Building is to restore it to reflect the architecture of each of the individual building's construction dates and the dates of major historic alterations. Photo documentation will enable a detailed replication of the original cornice of the 616 Church Street building. Original wood floors, steel columns, metal ceilings and exterior facades have been uncovered and are being restored. In 1958, when the architectural firm of Marr and Holman designed the changes to the building, they effectively became one structure. The facades were unified by the new storefront and the buildings joined on all floors. Also the corner entry was installed, as was the mezzanine railing. The character defining features from 1958-1959 will be retained. The Castner - Knott Building is being rehabilitated according to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and the owners are utilizing the preservation tax incentives.

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Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Castner - Knott Building is being nominated to the National Register under criterion A for its local significance in commerce. As one of the leading retailers in Nashville and the surrounding counties, Castner - Knott was an important component in the historic downtown shopping area. The different architectural styles of the two original buildings and, especially the 1958-1959 modifications, reflect the growth of the company and its efforts to modernize in order to keep people shopping in the Nashville business district. Although the changes completed by the prominent Nashville architectural firm of Marr and Holman are not yet fifty years old, they reflect a substantial phase in the retail development of the Castner - Knott Company and downtown retailing and add to the significance of the building.

The Castner - Knott Building is situated at the east end of a two block stretch of the remaining early twentieth century commercial buildings in Nashville. These include the Doctor's Building (NR 7/25/85) and the Bennie Dillon Building (NR 8/16/84). The Castner - Knott Building, along with the former the Harvey's Building on the east side of Capitol Boulevard mark a gateway to Capitol Boulevard and frame the major axial view of the Tennessee State Capitol (NHL 11/11/71). The loss of any one of these similarly scaled commercial buildings would have a devastating impact on the remaining structures at this central location along the north side of Church Street. The Castner - Knott Building is the best extant example of the type of twentieth century "mid-rise" retail buildings that were once prevalent Nashville.

The Castner - Knott Dry Goods Company was founded in 1898 by Nashvillians Charles Castner and William Knott. The first store opened that year on Fifth Avenue, adjacent to what was then the edge of a wealthy residential area near Church Street. In 1900 Loveman's moved from the Public Square to Fifth Avenue and Union Street and, in 1903, the Cain Sloan department store began operation in Nashville.

Castner - Knott's move, in 1906, from its original location at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Church Street (opened only eight years before) to the corner of Seventh Avenue and Church Street was a significant first step in the westward commercial expansion of the city along Church Street. This move signaled the beginning of one of three major periods of commercial growth on this portion of Church Street. It also represents the expansion of the commercial district onto property that was previously residential. In fact, the new Castner - Knott Building was constructed on a portion of the site formerly housing the residence of President James K. Polk.

Newspaper articles indicate that when Castner - Knott announced this move two blocks west of its original location "employees were concerned bankruptcy would result from the company's planned

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Castner - Knott Building  
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move to a new building in the suburbs".<sup>1</sup> However, ninety-three year old Mrs. Agnes Nance reported in 1973 that "It was terribly quiet there for several months.... But the customers finally came out to where we were, and they never left".<sup>2</sup> Clothing, groceries, stoves and trading stamps were just a few of the articles available at the store.

After Castner - Knott's relocation, its competitor, Cain Sloan, took over Castner - Knott's former location at Fifth Avenue and Church Street. The opening of The Arcade (NR 12/5/83) between Fourth and Fifth avenues in 1903 and the move of Castner - Knott to this site in 1906 set the stage for the construction of the Bennie Dillon Building at the northwest corner of Church and Seventh in 1925.

A newspaper article from December 28, 1906 comments on the importance of Castner - Knott's move:

Among other things, it means new boundaries for the shopping district. It means the enlarging of that district. It means that Nashville people can shop at as fine, at as large and at as modern a store as can the people of any of the other large cities of the south... The main floor... an appearance of elegance and beauty that one does not see in many stores outside of Chicago and New York. Its fixtures are the latest design and are duplicates of those in the store of Chafin and Co. Thirty-fourth Street, New York City.<sup>3</sup>

These comments support the important role that Castner - Knott indeed played in advancing the boundaries of the commercial district and also suggest its role in establishing Nashville as a major city in what was still the aftermath of the Civil War. Castner - Knott was, in fact, one of the first southern stores to establish a buying office in New York City. According to the newspaper:

Mrs. Agnes Nance recalled making her first trip to buy New York goods about 1905. "My father was an old Confederate soldier," she said, "and he was concerned about me going to the North. ' If any of those Yankees up there make any remarks to you, then just call me on the telephone and I'll be right up,' he told me. The Yankees, she said, "were always very nice."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Castner - Knott: "Fear" to Dollars. 23 September 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Newspaper. 28 December 1906.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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The H.B. Claffin Company bought Castner - Knott in 1908 but, in 1914 the company was bankrupt. Unknown to many Nashvillians, Castner - Knott was purchased by Mercantile Stores Corporation circa 1914.<sup>5</sup> The Castner - Knott Building expanded in 1933 when it leased a portion of the adjacent building at 616 Church Street. Constructed in 1911 and known as the Armstrong Building, one of the occupants of the building for many years was the B.H. Stief Jewelry Company. A 1920s newspaper report about the jewelry company's move to 616 Church Street stated:

Then, sensing the uptown movement of Nashville business, the beautiful new store at Church street and Capitol boulevard was erected and occupied. Now this store has become a veritable landmark for those who seek the assurance of quality.<sup>6</sup>

The Armstrong Building fronts twenty-seven feet on Church Street and 147 feet on Capitol Boulevard. Downtown Nashville was still the primary shopping area when the two buildings were connected. New competition entered the market in 1942 when Harvey's Department Store opened on Church Street.

The second period of commercial growth in downtown Nashville occurred in the 1950s, during the post-war boom years. Harvey's Department Store moved to the corner of Sixth Avenue and Church Street and added a fifth floor to the building. Harvey's also launched an aggressive promotional campaign that included new escalators, caged monkeys and a children's carousel. Cain Sloan Department Store constructed a new building at Fifth Avenue and Church Street in 1957. Soon after that, Harvey's expanded into the former Cain Sloan building, extending its store to encompass the block between Fifth and Sixth avenues along Church Street. The firm of Marr and Holman, who would complete the remodeling for Castner - Knott in 1958, were the architects for Harvey's 1957 renovations.

In 1955, the same year that Cain Sloan announced it was spending eight million dollars for the construction of a new department store, including a \$1.25 million parking structure, Castner - Knott announced a major three million dollar expansion, as well as construction of a new 200 car parking garage. The 166 by 138 foot lot they obtained was considered "one of the most valuable pieces of downtown property."<sup>7</sup> Castner - Knott was still leasing the building at 618 Church Street from the Schwab estate, which agreed to modify the lease so that improvements could be carried out. Also in 1955, the first suburban shopping center opened in Green Hills, a residential suburb of

<sup>5</sup> "Castner plans 100th birthday party." 19 May 1998. (Another source has Mercantile buying Castner - Knott around 1919.)

<sup>6</sup> "B.H. Stief Jewelry Company Celebrates 66th Birthday." 9 (19?) October 1924.

<sup>7</sup> "Castner - Knott Will Build on Hermitage Lot."

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Castner - Knott Building  
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Nashville, and was quickly followed by the opening of the Madison Square Shopping Center in 1956. Castner - Knott was the first major store to expand into the suburban market in Nashville when it opened a store in Green Hills. Twelve branch stores were eventually opened.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps it was this suburban competition, as well as an awareness that the shift of urban population to the suburbs and the ease with which the automobile provided access to suburban shopping centers, that led to Castner - Knott's outwardly less ambitious expansion beginning in 1958, three years after announcing its expansion. In fact, a 1958 article explains "The big expansion plan, which was postponed when money became critically tight and department store sales started falling is still not foreseen for the immediate future".<sup>9</sup> Armstrong's, the ladies shop at 616 Church Street closed in 1958. Although Castner - Knott had leased a portion of the building since 1933, it now had a thirty-seven year lease for the entire building. A new front entrance, new fixtures, new lighting, and air conditioning were planned. The new space added 22,000 square feet to Castner - Knott's operation. This was approximately twenty-five percent of their current space.<sup>10</sup> Even though the original plans were apparently modified, it appears that Castner - Knott decided some expansion and changes were needed if it was to keep up with its downtown competitors. Robert C. Hilton, the company's president, announced that the new space would be used for retail sales and offices. New employees would be hired and former Armstrong workers were to be given the opportunity to work for Castner - Knott.

The Castner - Knott company hired the firm of Marr and Holman, Architects, one of Nashville's prominent architectural firms. Marr and Holman had previously designed such important buildings as the U.S. Post Office on Broadway (NR 11/15/84, soon to be renovated as a major art museum), the Tennessee Supreme Court Building and the former Sudekum Building (the demolished Tennessee Theatre and Office Tower). Although Joseph Holman and Thomas Marr were no longer living, there was certainly a motivation to present a progressive and solid direction in Castner - Knott's choice of architectural firms to design their updated presence on Church Street. It now appears that the choice may also have been based on keeping up with Harvey's.

Marr and Holman redesigned the first floor interiors and storefronts in an Art Moderne style that related architecturally to the new Cain Sloan and Life and Casualty buildings, both constructed in 1957. They cut off the corner of the building at Church Street and Capitol Boulevard and made this the new main entry into the store. The addition of a mezzanine with Art Moderne railings and the introduction of 1950s pendant lighting and elevator annunciator lights were further attempts to

<sup>8</sup> "Castner - Knott Lights 94 Candles For A Big Anniversary Celebration." 16 September 1992.

<sup>9</sup> "Castner - Knott Agrees to Buy Armstrong Lease." 14 August 1958.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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Castner - Knott Building  
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present a modern image. This expansion also completed connecting all floors of the 616 Church Street and 618 Church Street buildings.

In 1959 Castner - Knott announced another expansion. The company arranged to purchase the building at 223 Capitol Boulevard, the former Zanini's Restaurant. Mercantile Stores Corporation reportedly paid \$250,000 for the fifty by 140 foot property. Castner - Knott now had the entire commercial block and it was estimated that expansion plans could cost up to five million dollars.<sup>11</sup> The first floor at the corner of Capitol Boulevard and Church Street was remodeled and re-opened on December 9, 1959 with a "doorless" entrance that would maintain temperatures between the store and outside. The "Door-Less-Door" worked by utilizing air currents and a grill that was "fine enough to support spike heeled shoes."<sup>12</sup> Hilton stated that Castner - Knott was the first department store in the south to use the door. The department store received a "City Beautiful Meritorious Award for Outstanding Downtown Improvements" in 1960.<sup>13</sup>

Even this last outburst of department store construction and expansion could not overcome the lure of the suburban shopping centers. At the same time Nashville's principal downtown department stores - Castner - Knott, Cain Sloan and Harvey's - were remodeling and modernizing their buildings, they were branching out into the suburbs. Sears and Loveman's had stores in downtown Nashville and were also branching out. This self-cannibalization occurred during the 1960s Civil Rights unrest that was highlighted on Church Street by the sit-in at Walgreens' lunch counter located in the center of the shopping district. Continuing efforts to modernize the store occurred in 1979 when Ralph T. Glassford, president of Castner - Knott Company, announced that the downtown store would get a new facade. Steel-ite panels, constructed of coated and galvanized metal panels would be placed over all of the exterior of the store building.<sup>14</sup>

By 1988, the other major downtown department stores were closed. Harvey's closed in 1984 and Cain Sloan closed in 1988. Castner - Knott had no substantial competition in Nashville until Dillard's entered the market with its purchase of Cain Sloan in 1987, according to one retail analyst in 1993.<sup>15</sup> Castner - Knott was the last of the major retail stores to operate downtown. The company managed to hang on to the downtown location for another nine years until it finally closed its doors in 1996.

<sup>11</sup> "Castner's To Get Zanini Building." 1959.

<sup>12</sup> "Castner - Knott Opens New Capitol Boulevard Addition." 9 December 1959.

<sup>13</sup> "Castner - Knott Facelift Inspires Recall of Simpler, Days" 28 June 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Castner - Knott Faces Fight For Top Market Share." 28 November 1993.

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The late 1990s represents the third, and current, phase of Church Street's growth. Some of the historic buildings on Church Street have been demolished, but renovation of the Castner - Knott and the Bennie Dillon buildings are underway. The newly constructed Cumberland Apartments are being leased and construction is beginning on the new Nashville Public Library in the former shopping district.

The combination in the late 1950s of the Italianate 616 Church Street building, constructed in 1911, with the earlier Classical Revival 618 building, constructed in 1906, along with the 1958-1959 modernization, is a living record of the growth and changes of one of Nashville's truly great department stores and of the city itself. The building has extraordinary significance as it has been and continues to be a key landmark and anchor for this central part of the commercial district. The architectural juxtapositions described represent, perhaps more than any other building in this area, the continued attempts that Nashville has made throughout this century at having a vital downtown commercial center.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles from local newspapers: *The Nashville Banner* and *The Tennessean*:

10/19/24	B.H. Stief Jewelry Company Celebrates 66th Birthday
10/30/32	Castner - Knott Agrees to Buy Armstrong Lease
11/12/35	Castner - Knott Will Build On Hermitage Lot
01/12/58	Latest in Castner - Knott Expansion
11/12/59	Seek Public Reaction To Chimes
12/09/59	Castner - Knott Opens New Capitol Boulevard Addition
07/07/59	Castners To Get Zanini Building
09/23/71	Castner - Knott 'Fear' to Dollars
06/20/79	Castner - Knott Facelift inspires Recall Of Simpler, Days
07/03/80	Polk Flats replaced historic Polk Home
06/07/87	Castner - Knott only survivor downtown
06/20/91	B.H. Stief a business gemstone
09/16/92	Castner - Knott Lights 94 Candles For A Big Anniversary Celebration!
11/28/93	Castner - Knott Faces Fight For Top Market Share
01/12/96	Bell tolls for Church Street
01/12/96	A century of downtown retail
01/12/96	Memories of Church Street
05/19/98	Castner plans 100 <sup>th</sup> birthday party
08/20/98	Castner - Knott's conversion a sign of changing times
09/19/98	Castner ends century with a final sale

Additional historical information was gathered from personal interviews conducted in 1998 with Charles Chadwick, the Castner - Knott Historian, by Gil Given, project manager for Adventure III Properties, LLC.

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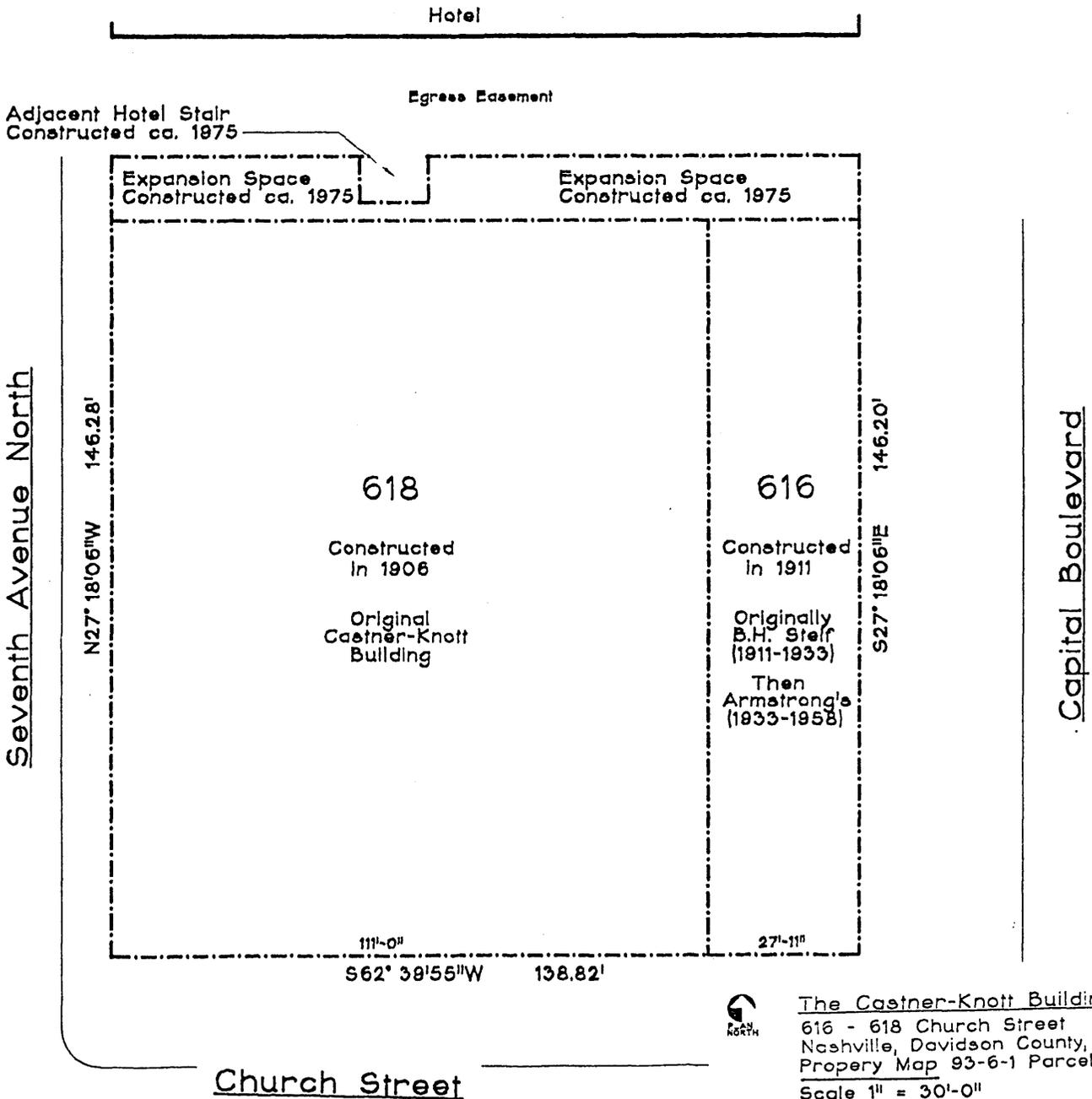
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Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying property map (1" = 30'). The boundaries are determined based on the surveyed site plan which indicates the building fills the full site. The building sets on parcels 1 and 2 of Davidson County tax map 93-6-1.



The Castner-Knott Building  
616 - 618 Church Street  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee  
Property Map 93-6-1 Parcels 1&2  
Scale 1" = 30'-0"  
Boundary

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

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Davidson County, Tennessee

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Current:

The Castner - Knott Building  
616 – 618 Church Street  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee

Exterior Photos

Photo by:    Manuel Zeitlin  
Date:        October 22, 1998  
Neg.:        Nashville, Tennessee

View: East façade along Capitol Boulevard Showing the B.H. Stief/Armstrong's façade with original cornice removed in 1975 (to be replaced) and contextual view looking west on Church Street (bridge is now removed).

#1 of 17

View: Close – up of east façade showing fenestration and new park in foreground.

#2 of 17

View: Close – up of corner entry at Church Street and Capitol Boulevard designed by the firm of Marr and Holman Architects.

#3 of 17

View: Contextual view looking east on Church Street. Original Castner - Knott Building, at 618 Church Street, has white glazed brick and original cornice.

#4 of 17

View: West façade of 618 Church Street looking north on Seventh Avenue.

#5 of 17

View: Close – up of cornice, windows, glazed brick and the adjacent Bennie Dillon Building located across Seventh Avenue.

#6 of 17

View: Close – up of interface between the 618 Church Street and 616 Church Street sections of the Castner - Knott Building. Note original limestone capitals in place at tops of pilasters and location of original cornice brackets indicated by brick pattern.

#7 of 17

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Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

View: East façade of 616 Church Street looking south showing fenestration and brick detailing.  
#8 of 17

View: Detail at original entry at east façade along Capitol Boulevard. Field brick is buff colored with red and black accent panels above original storefront locations. Original marquis canopy brackets are visible on each side of the original door location. Also note limestone pilaster bases and storefront sills & headers.

#9 of 17

## Historic Photos

The Castner - Knott Building  
616 – 618 Church Street  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee  
Photo by: unknown  
Date: unknown

View: East façade looking west on Church Street. This photo provides documentation for reconstruction of original cornice.

#10 of 17

View: East façade looking north on Capitol Boulevard. This photo provides documentation for new canopy at new east lobby entry along Capitol Boulevard. It also provides views of original storefronts, including transoms. Note use of Capitol Boulevard for political parade referred to in the statement of significance.

#11 of 17

View: East façade looking south on Capitol Boulevard. Documents original Armstrong's awnings. Note use of Capitol Boulevard for patriotic rally referred to in the statement of significance.

#12 of 17

View: South façade looking east on Church Street. Documents original Castner - Knott awnings and valences (currently existing) and storefront level façade prior to 1958 renovation.

#13 of 17

View: Southwest corner of 618 Church Street.

#14 of 17

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Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

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View: Cornice detail.  
#15 of 17

View: Early view looking east along Church Street.  
#16 of 17

View: Early view looking east along Church Street.  
#17 of 17

The Castner - Knott Building  
616 – 618 Church Street  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee  
Interior Photos  
Photo by: Manuel Zeitlin  
Date: March 15, 1999  
Neg.: Nashville, Tennessee

View: First floor tin ceiling and column capitols. Note square column at 1<sup>st</sup> bay only.  
#1 of 13

View: Upper floor tin ceiling  
#2 of 13

View: Mezzanine railing circa 1958  
#3 of 13

View: 616 Church Street stair railing  
#4 of 13

View: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of 616 Church Street with transom windows and exterior cladding removed  
#5 of 13

View: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 618 Church Street left side of panoramic view  
#6 of 13

View: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 618 Church Street right side of panoramic view  
#7 of 13

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Castner - Knott Building  
Davidson County, Tennessee

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View: 4<sup>th</sup> floor of 618 Church Street southwest corner. Note wood floors, tin ceilings and transom windows at all levels of 618 Church Street.

#8 of 13

View: Close-up of 618 Church Street west side windows. Note rippled glass at transoms and view of Bennie Dillon Building

#9 of 13

View: Connection between 616 Church Street and 618 Church Street at 3<sup>rd</sup> floor looking east

#10 of 13

View: Close-up of 616 Church Street east side window

#11 of 13

View: Detail of screened poplar floors at 618 Church Street 4<sup>th</sup> floor leaving existing patina

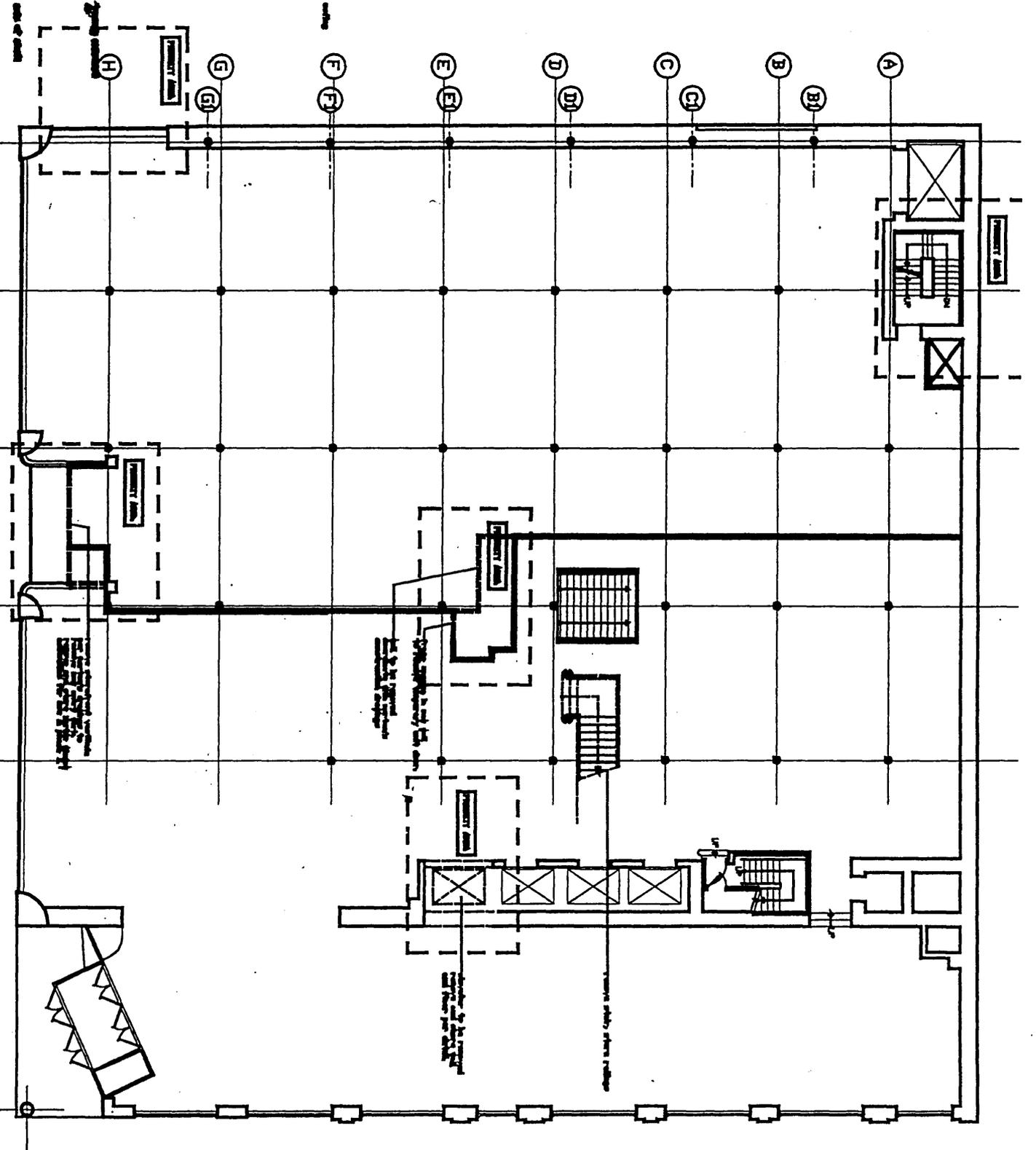
#12 of 13

View: Close-up of circa 1958 pendant light fixture

#13 of 13

1st Floor  
1" = 20'-0"

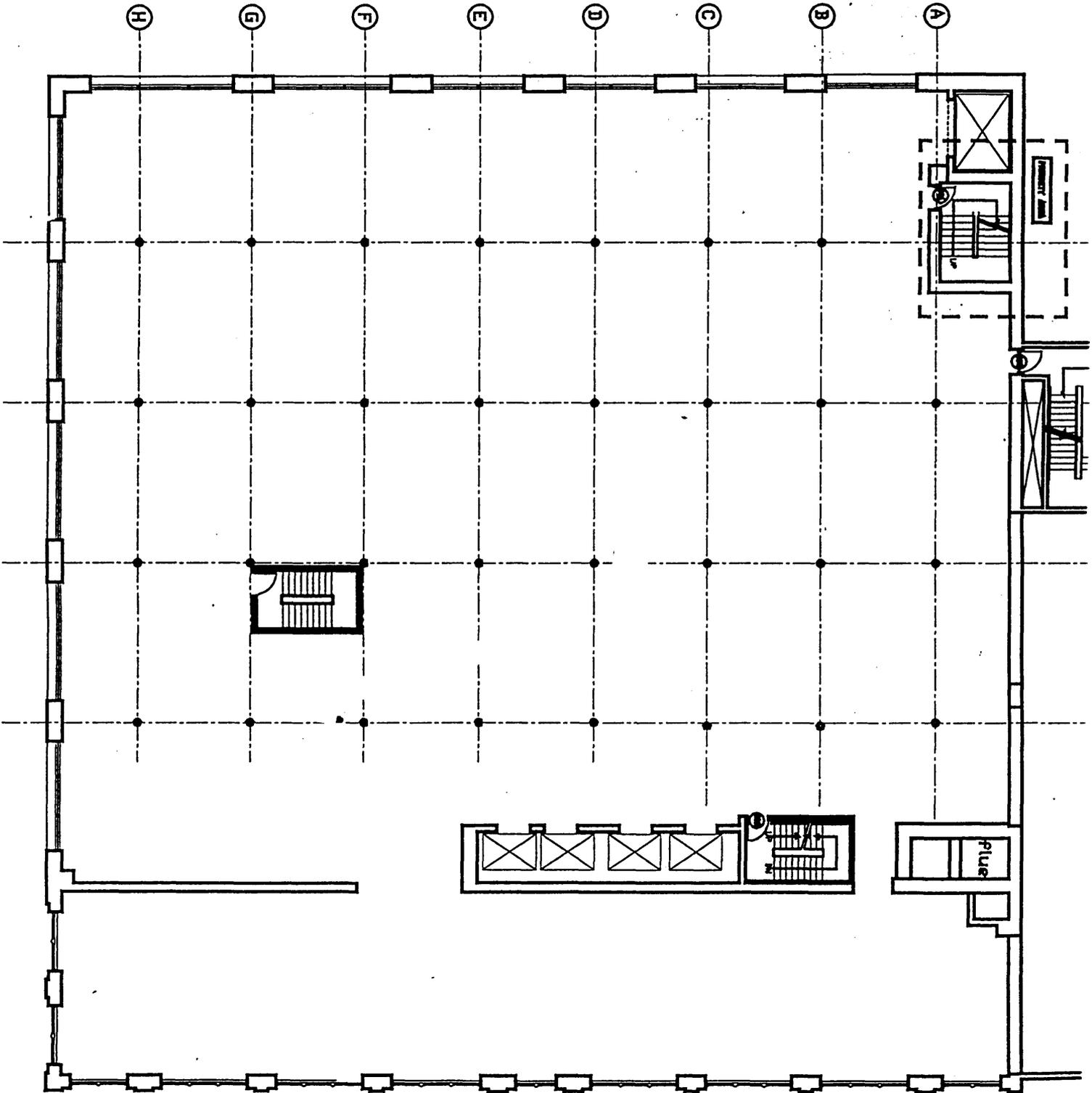
# Castner - Knott Building Davidson Co. TN



Architectural drawing  
1st Floor plan



Cashner-KNOTT  
Building  
Davidson Co. TN  
Typical floor



Castner-Knott Building  
Davidson Co. TN  
Survey map

