NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

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OHP
INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking an "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Pacific Gas and Electric Company General Office Building and Annex
other names/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 245 Market Street — N/A ☐ not for publication
city, town: San Francisco — N/A ☐ vicinity
state: California code: CA county: San Francisco code: CA 075 zipcode: 94106

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☒ private	☒ building(s)	1	____ buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district	____	____ sites
☐ public-State	☐ site	____	____ structures
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure	____	____ objects
	☐ object	1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ☐ See Continuation Sheet.

Signature of Certifying Official: Daniel Abeyta, Deputy — Date: 10/12/95

State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal Agency and bureau

In my opinion the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ☐ See Continuation Sheet.

Signature of Certifying Official — Date

State or Federal Agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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: Edson H. Beall — Date of Action: 11.29.95
Entered in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & early 20th century Revivals: Beaux Arts

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Terra Cotta
roof Terra Cotta Tile
other Windows: Aluminum & Glass
Ground, 14th/15th Fl. Windows: Steel & Glass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

General

The seventeen story Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) General Office Building, designed by architects Bakewell and Brown and built between 1923 and 1925, occupies a site on the corner of Market and Beale Streets in San Francisco, and together with its neighbor to the east, the Matson Building, is one of a series of skyscrapers built during the 1910s and 1920s which impart to San Francisco its downtown character. The General Office Building was enlarged in 1945-1947 to the design of Arthur Brown, Jr., though the architects are listed as Bakewell and Brown; associated architects in this later construction were Weihe, Frick and Kruse. The addition, which has its own address at 25 Beale Street, is fully interconnected with the main structure and functions with it as one building. In 1993-1995, the General Office Building and its Annex were retrofitted to withstand earthquake forces, and were substantially remodelled as part of the retrofit process. [Design team for this latest alteration is listed at the end of Section 7.] The seismic retrofit effort was tax certified under the provisions of federal law, and construction work was monitored by the State Office of Historic Preservation and the western regional office of the National Park Service.

Site

The PG&E General Office Building and its Annex occupy about one quarter of the block bounded by Market Street, Main, Mission and Beale Streets. This entire square block, slowly acquired by PG&E over a period of years beginning in 1922, is now owned by PG&E and functions as its headquarters complex. In addition to the adjacent Matson Building and Annex, the site includes a modern headquarters tower (77 Beale Street); a courtyard building which functions as the electronic and computer headquarters of the utility (45 Beale Street); and a garage originally constructed by the Matson Lines, 50 Main Street. See Figure 16, Site Plan. This nomination is for the PG&E General Office Building and Annex only.

Plan

As can be seen from the Site Plan (Figure 16), the PG&E General Office Building occupied a nearly square site about 138 feet by 138 feet. Its annex enlarged the site some 140 feet to the south, along Beale Street. The basement occupies the entire site. The original ground floor plan contained an auditorium, the interior of which was demolished when 45 Beale Street was constructed in1970. Upper floors were arranged in an "L" shaped configuration, with each wing about forty-five feet across. The Annex lengthened the Beale Street arm of the "L" to the south. This kind of configuration allows ample natural lighting into upper office floors. The two wings were served by a bank of six elevators placed on the south side of the Market Street arm of the "L", directly opposite the main entrance on the first floor. When the Annex was constructed in 1947, another bank of four elevators was added at a location opposite the Annex entry, at 25 Beale Street. Four stairways existed in the pre-retrofit structure, provided at both banks of elevators in the General Office Building and at one elevator bank and the southern end of the Annex. Location of stairs and core elements was changed at the time of the seismic retrofit to meet code requirements.

Exterior

Reflecting Beaux Arts and City Beautiful precepts of harmony among the elements in a composition, the PG&E General Office Building was designed specifically to be compatible with the adjacent Matson Building (Figure 1). Similar to the Matson Building and other skyscrapers built during the 1910s and early 1920s, the primary elevations are divided vertically into three major divisions – separated by horizontal divisions relating to those of the Matson Building, immediately east. The lower divisions are ornamented with a Classical arcade, rising through two stories, and modern-date allegories of power and light (Figure 3); and the fourteenth and fifteenth floors, capping the structure, are articulated by a giant order of applied Doric columns with full entablature which is very similar to the base of the dome on San Francisco's City Hall. The "shaft", or central portion of the elevations, is expressed with paired windows lighting each

[x] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Commerce	1923-1947	1923-
Architecture		1945-

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Bakewell, John Jr., & Brown, Arthur Jr., 1923-1925
Consulting Structural Engineer: Snyder, C. H., 1923-1925
Consulting Mechanical Engineers: Hunter & Hunter, 1923-25

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

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company General Office Building and Annex appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance under Criterion A, patterns of events, for its role in commerce as the headquarters of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (hereafter PG&E), the private gas and electric utility company servicing almost all of Northern and Central California; and at the local level of significance under Criterion C, architecture, as a very fine embodiment of the large terra cotta-clad office building type as found in the 1920s in downtown San Francisco. The PG&E Building forms a splendid pair with the adjacent Matson Building (being nominated concurrently) along Market Street, the city's principal artery and focus of transportation. The PG&E Building's significant dates are bounded by the years of construction: 1923-1925 for the original building and 1945-1947 for the complementary annex. The period of significance is 1923-1947, from the beginning of construction until an arbitrary date about 50 years ago, because the building continues to house the PG&E headquarters, and the company's significance as a utility also continues. The exterior and some interior spaces are intact as to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Commerce

PG&E is, in terms of sales, the largest investor-owned gas and electric utility in the United States. It has been one of the five largest utilities in the country during most of this century. Between 1923 and 1947, the building's period of significance, the company's service area expanded from 40,000 to 89,000 square miles to comprise most of Central and Northern California, and the population it served grew from 2.2 million to 4.75 million. During this period, the company's revenues grew from $48 to $184 million. Today the company serves an area of 94,000 square miles and has operating revenues exceeding $10 billion. Its closest competitor in California, Southern California Edison Company, has a service area of 50,000 square miles and operating revenus of $7 billion. PG&E exerts a strong leverage upon the economy of California, since the power it supplies lies at the base of most commerce and agriculture in its region.

The descendant of an illuminating gas company founded in San Francisco in 1852, PG&E was incorporated in 1905 as the merger of two utility companies which had each absorbed several earlier utilities. From 1919 through 1930 it acquired eight additional conglomerations of utilities and merged them all into a single unified company. Predecessor companies number more than 520 small utilities scattered over the entire Northern and Central portions of California. In 1952 the company's centennial historian summed up:

> What PG&E's contribution has meant to the economic progress of the territory it serves cannot be stated statistically. It is self-evident that only with the aid of a progressively improved and adequate service of electric power and gas could Northern California's economy have advanced as it has. Equally true is the corollary that as the territory grew and prospered, so did the utility system grow and prosper.
>
> The Company['s]...lines enter almost every home. It serves the business and industry and agriculture of an area in which 5,000,000 persons live. With total assets of approximately one and three-quarters billion dollars, the utility is owned by 188,463 stockholders...[T]he Company's 17,000 employees...are integral parts of the communities in which they serve. /1

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1. Coleman, *P.G. and E. of California* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 339.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Architect and Engineer, 71 (December 1922): 88.
The Architect and Engineer, (March 1949): illus., 22.
Bakewell, John. "Architectural Treatment of the Building," *Pacific Service Magazine*, 16 (July 1925): 147-151.
Corbett, Michael. *Splendid Survivors.* San Francisco: California Living Books, 1979.
Coleman, Charles M. *PG&E of California.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1952.
"$4,000,000 PG&E Building," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 10, 1924.
Gladding, McBean & Co. *Shapes of Clay*, 1 (November 1925): illus., 1-7,

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) 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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	553225	4182745
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Pacific Gas and Electric General Office Building and Annex site is shown as the hatched area on the accompanying map, Figure 16.

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the site is that portion of Lot 19, Assessor's Block 3711 which is covered by the PG&E General Office Building and Annex. The remainder of this lot is covered by the Matson Building and Annex (being nominated separately) and by additional buildings which were constructed after the period of significance.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Gordon Turnbull, FAIA, Principal

organization Page & Turnbull, Inc. **date** July 28, 1995

street & number 724 Pine Street **telephone** 415-362-5154

city or town San Francisco **state** California **zip code** 94108

structural bay. Windows on all but certain floors, originally casements fabricated of steel, were replaced in the early 1980s with aluminum sliding units similar to the steel originals. The first and second, and fourteenth and fifteenth floors retain steel windows.

The PG&E General Office Building is similar to public buildings in the San Francisco Civic Center: in the use of rusticated Granitex terra cotta, manufactured by Gladding, McBean to provide a uniform appearance across all three divisions of the primary elevations; the use of a light-colored and reflective cladding to reinforce the idea of cleanliness and establish allusions to Classical architecture; the use of a sculptural grouping and elaborate light fixtures flanking the main entrance; and the use of flood lighting, which was an integral part of the original design concept for the building (Figure 4.)

The form and massing of the building begin to suggest later developments in skyscraper design. The General Office Building was designed in 1922, the same year as the Chicago Tribune competition and the publication of Eliel Saarinen's seminal but losing entry in this competition. The Saarinen design had shown a tall, slender tower culminating in a series of setbacks. These setbacks were ornamented with Gothic tracery which gave the top of the building great depth and a staccato, vertical rhythm, obviating the need for a strong horizontal cornice to visually terminate the elevations. Although possessing strong similarities to the Saarinen design, the exterior of the PG&E General Office Building is unique within the context of San Francisco skyscrapers. The uniqueness of the PG&E General Office Building lies in its unadorned shaft which culminates in a series of setback wall planes at the fourteenth/fifteenth floors and sixteenth/seventeenth floors, the strong verticality of the ornament at the top of the building, the lack of a substantial cornice sized in proportion to the building, and the use of urns atop the parapet wall which function like Gothic finials in late 1920s skyscrapers.

Along Market Street, eight bays are established by the engaged colonnade at the fourteenth/fifteenth floors and the pairing of windows in the central portion of the shaft. At the first and second floors, double-height arches reinforce the bays; at the central two bays, the entry arch occupies a double bay width and rises through the third floor. Along Beale Street, original construction was five bays wide rising through the entire height of the building, and three bays wide at the three-story level. When the Annex was added in 1947, these three bays were raised to twelve story height, and the Beale Street structure continued, at thirteen stories, another eight bays along Beale Street. To maintain the string course established at the thirteenth-story level on the original building, the Annex continues that line and expresses the uppermost story as a slightly recessed hip-roofed volume held back from the main volume.

Courtyard elevations of both the General Office Building and the Annex were Granitex brick, though terra cotta was used for cladding at the elevator penthouse of the Annex and at the penthouse of the main building, which were meant to be seen from all sides. As part of the retrofit, tile was used in place of Granitex brick on those portions of the courtyard elevations where new shear walls had been inserted.

Structural System

The structural system of the PG&E General Office Building is reinforced concrete foundations placed over wood piles. The structural frame is steel; floors are concrete slabs; and exterior walls were built of common masonry faced with cast terra cotta. Many interior partitions were of hollow clay tile faced with plaster and were determined to be structurally insufficient to withstand seismic forces. Almost all of them were removed as part of the seismic retrofit project, 1993-1995, as agreed to with the National Park Service. Where hollow clay tile remains, it has been seismically reinforced and braced.

The structural system of the Annex is somewhat more modern; hollow steel-panel movable walls, not hollow clay tile, were used for interior partitions in this structure.

The retrofit project sought to stabilize the PG&E General Office Building and its Annex against earthquake forces.The structural retrofit program included a complete seismic retrofit of the super-structure, strengthening and articulation of the historic terra cotta facade, and protection of potentially hazardous historic finishes and ornamentation. The owner, PG&E, established *Seismic Performance Goals* to guide the structural design; these goals included *Protection of Occupant and Pedestrian Life Safety* and *Provisions for Immediate Access and Rapid Return to Functional Operation.* The super-structure was strengthened with a series of concrete shear walls interconnected with ductile, energy-absorbing beams. These new walls replaced the existing unreinforced masonry infill walls of the inner courtyard, as illustrated in Figure 24. The significant, but brittle, terra cotta facade was strengthened *in situ* by casting a reinforced concrete skin on the interior. Furthermore, the stiff but brittle piers were isolated from the earthquake-induced building distortions using the Articulated Facade concept illustrated in Figure 25. Horizontal slits were sawcut at the top and bottom of each pier, completely through the terra cotta facing, brick masonry backing and new concrete skin. This jointing of the facade permits the pier to rock with the lateral motions instead of absorbing energy and fracturing.

Interior

The main lobby of the General Office Building is finished with Indiana limestone walls, Tennessee marble floors, and a highly ornamental molded plaster ceiling which is heavily gilded. Clearly the most important single space in the structure, the appearance of the room was preserved even though substantial structural work was required in this location during the seismic retrofit. Limestone walls were taken down and stored; portions of the ceiling were removed and protected; and the floor was protected in place. Once structural work was done, the room was entirely reassembled (Figure 13.)

Alterations to the lobby include the replacement, c. 1950s, of the original multi-light elevator doors with solid, bronze-finished doors and the addition of modern indicator lights and call buttons. Light standards and registers have been returned to the lobby. Existing plaster columns at the south end of the elevator lobby originally marked the transition to a small square assembly room, illuminated from above by skylight. Beyond the columns, a stone-clad wall with cased opening - similar to the existing end walls of the outer lobby - originally separated the elevator lobby from the assembly room. The assembly room and lobby were demolished for the construction of 45 Beale Street, which was added to the south end of the Market Street wing in 1970.

Room 104, originally the Cashier's Office, and Room 114, originally the Stock Transfer Office, have been altered partly in 1970, and partly at an earlier, unknown date. Nevertheless, they retain some historic integrity. The northern portions of both rooms were divided into public spaces for customers and office spaces for PG&E cashiers by marble-clad counters with wickets. The counters were removed from both rooms at unknown dates. The plaster wall and ceiling finishes, plaster cornices and capitals, marble wainscoting and door surrounds and mechanical grilles remained prior to the seismic retrofit, and were maintained or restored, to be re-used by retail tenants at the close of the seismic work.

The organization of the upper floors of the PG&E General Office Building, even more so than the upper floors of the Matson Building, was unusual for this building type. On most floors, the elevator core, located adjacent to the intersection of the two legs of the "L"-shaped plan, opened onto short segments of corridor with doors at the ends. These segments of corridor led either to large work rooms, that on many floors filled an entire wing of the building, or opened into a corridor that wrapped around the Market and Beale Street corner, leading to individual offices or other large work rooms. Substantiated in an article by one of the architects, John Bakewell, great effort was made to resolve the spatial organization of the department offices prior to the preparation of contract documents in order to minimize changes made after the preparation of drawings and therefore minimize costs.

The corridors and offices on the upper floors were altered frequently and the new construction often included doors salvaged from other parts of the building, new or salvaged trim, and partitions, doors, and other elements moved from the 1940s addition. The condition of the upper floors prior to seismic retrofit, which was predominantly double-loaded corridors with small offices opening onto the corridors, was a product of these periodic alterations. Offices on upper floors were modest in character, characterized largely by oak door casing and baseboards, with oak cubbies, namely, oak cabinets containing a sink compartment and a coat closet. Many of the oak fixtures and much of the trim had been painted.

Department head offices, located at the corner of Market and Beale Streets on the second, fourth, ninth, eleventh, thirteenth and fifteenth floors, and the executive offices on the fourteenth floor received higher quality finishes than the typical offices. These department head offices are similar to typical offices in the building except for their larger size and marble fireplaces supplied with electric heaters.

The elevator lobby, corridor and the executive office suites on the fourteenth floor were, in 1993, little altered from their original condition. They were characterized by high ceilings, paneled walls clad entirely in oak or with oak wainscots and paneled plaster above, plaster ceilings, oak and pine floors, built-in sink closets, and fireplaces with marble mantels.

Department head offices, fourteenth floor executive offices, and the entire second floor of the General Office Building have been retained because of their historic value. A variety of strategies for retention of the spaces has been used. Certain rooms were held in place, their hollow clay tile walls stabilized, and returned to use. Other rooms (particularly those which were wood paneled) were demounted and re-erected. Still others were re-erected in modern materials, but trim and character-defining appointments were returned to place.

Seismic Retrofit, 1992-1995

The goals of the seismic retrofit program and the basis of the structural design were motivated by PG&E's regional program to ensure its operation and response capabilities following a major earthquake, and PG&E's desire to preserve the historic character of their Market Street facility. The construction of a state-of-the-art earthquake-resisting structural system in the midst of sensitive historic materials and finishes posed a challenge to the entire design, construction and design review team, requiring consideration of all alternatives and the balance of economic, seismic performance and historic preservation criteria. The configuration and location of the shear wall system, while requiring some invasive measures, optimized both structural performance and maintenance of the original design intent for the courtyard facades. The articulation of the terra cotta facade introduces a new technique for the protection and preservation of unreinforced masonry and steel-frame infill systems common throughout the Bay Area. The technique provides for a high level of confidence in good seismic performance, and at the same time is accomplished with minimal disturbance of existing materials and a negligible change of appearance, consistent with the Historic Preservation Standards.

Design Team

Project team for the seismic retrofit included Project Manager - Hines Interests Limited Partnership: James Morrison, Vice President; Project Architect - Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris: Lamberto Moris, Principal; Production Architect - Kendall/Heaton Associates: William Kendall, Principal, Mike Desguin, Architect; Historic Architect - Page & Turnbull, Inc.: Jay Turnbull, Principal; Structural Engineer - Forell/Elsesser Engineers: Nick Forell and Eric Elsesser, Principals, Mark Jokerst, Engineer; Mechanical & Electrical Engineer - Flack + Kurtz: Clark Bisel, Principal; General Contractor - Dinwiddie Construction Company: Earl Barnum, Vice President.

The PG&E Building's role in this influential organization is as the company's headquarters. The construction of a new General Office Building in San Francisco, conceived as an effort to consolidate staff, was begun in 1922 with the purchase of a corner lot fronting on Market Street, adjacent to the Matson Navigation Company's new office building, then about to be constructed. Bakewell & Brown (John Bakewell Jr. and Arthur Brown Jr.) were hired as architects. Drawings for the 17-story building (with a three-story wing on Beale Street) were prepared in 1922, and the excavation was begun on 18 May 1923. The building was completed and occupied by April 1925.

For PG&E the 1920s were a period of expanding and consolidating territory. Construction of its office building in 1923-1925 had the effect of centralizing planning and senior executive relationships. Regions of the Company, however, were placed under division heads whose offices were in the field and who could act with full authority within their spheres. Company presidents [Wigginton E. Creed, 1920-1927, and A. E. Hockenbeamer, 1927-1935] exercised command from offices on the 14th floor of the General Office Building, a wood-paneled suite which included a Board Room and other offices for directors and high corporate officers. The building's ground floor contained a company auditorium (demolished 1970) which could be used for large group meetings; stock transfer and cashier's offices made up the rest of the ground floor. Typical upper floors included vice president or departmental head offices at the northwest corner of the building, and open plan drafting rooms in many areas. Many of the company's power stations and facilities, which led to its dominance of all Northern and Central California, were designed at 245 Market Street.

Territorial strength was gained in those years through absorption of the California Telephone and Light Company (serving Lake, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma Counties) in 1923; in 1927 the systems of the Western States (eight Northern California counties and parts of three others), Coast Valleys (Monterey and San Benito Counties), and Sierra (Stanislaus County and San Francisco streetcars) companies; and in 1930 the systems of the Great Western (competitor in San Francisco Bay area), Midland Counties (Coalinga plus Kings and San Luis Obispo Counties), and San Joaquin (most of Fresno, Merced, Kern and Santa Barbara Counties) companies. Natural gas was introduced to PG&E customers in 1929.

In contrast to the expansion of the 1920s, the 1930s tested PG&E's ability to survive. The worst period of business recession was 1931-1934, during which PG&E sales declined dramatically. In addition, the federally financed power programs of the mid-1930s, intended to improve business overall, produced surpluses of hydroelectric power from Shasta Dam and Hoover Dam. By cooperating with Southern California Edison, it was possible for PG&E to absorb large amounts of the power produced by these enormous public works. In the late 1930s, PG&E voluntarily lowered its electric and gas rates in an effort to spur consumption. But consumption demand did not really test the system again until World War II, when both gas and electric usage peaked. In 1941 PG&E sold 89 billion cubic feet of natural gas, four times what it had sold in 1930, but only two-thirds of its output in 1945.

At the close of the second war, the company's headquarters needs were such that a new Annex was planned to increase available office space by 50%. Architects Weihe, Frick & Kruse (Ernest Weihe had been Bakewell's partner after the Bakewell & Brown firm was dissolved about 1928) designed the Annex to harmonize with the existing PG&E Building and to fill in the original Beale Street extension up through the 15th floor. But they used more modern interior materials so that the space could be utilized more flexibly. An important innovation within the 1940s construction was the use of portable steel panels as office walls; these could be moved repeatedly in response to changing office needs. The exterior, however, is an almost perfect match of the 1922 design up to the 15th floor cornice, where it terminates with a hipped roof of tile.

Architecture: Tall Office Buildings

Tall office buildings with steel frames and facades organized as columns ("base," "shaft," and "capital") began to appear in San Francisco in the 1890s, most notably the Mills and Chronicle Buildings, both by Burnham & Root. Fourteen such buildings, which still survive in one form or another, had been or were being constructed by the time of the 1906 earthquake-fire. The lessons learned from that catastrophe taught that steel frames and terra cotta cladding survived these awful tests remarkably well. For the next decade San Francisco's financial center was rebuilt with many of these buildings, usually with historicist imagery used in a greater or lesser degree of ornamentation to define the base, shaft, and capital. The survey *Splendid Survivors,* published by The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, identified 18 such office buildings of ten stories or more, constructed between 1906 and 1919. In the building boom of the 1920s this type continued, but taller on the average than before. After 1925 the first type was joined by the stepped-back skyscraper inspired by New York City building/zoning codes and by Eliel Saarinen's second-place design for Chicago's Tribune Tower, for a total of 20 tall office buildings in the decade.

The PG&E Building is a very fine example of the tall office building designed as a column. It pairs admirably with the adjacent Matson Building and is a part of a potential discontiguous lower Market Street district consisting of 40 resources surveyed as eligible for the NationalRegister of Historic Places. The PG&E General Office Building's exterior design announces the company as virtually a public institution, because Bakewell & Brown chose architectural motifs they had used a decade earlier on the San Francisco City Hall: a giant arcaded base with rustication and sculptural pieces for keystones; a granite-like cladding; and, on the "capital," units like those on the drum of the City Hall dome: Roman Doric columns with individually projecting entablatures supporting giant urns.

Architecture: Terra Cotta

Architectural terra cotta had been used in San Francisco as a material for ornament at least in the 1880s, but after the 1906 fire the material began to be considered both as a substitute for brick or stone and as a versatile medium in its own right. The Hearst Building of 1909 at 691 Market Street, for instance, displayed 14 stories of polychrome terra cotta above a two-story marble base. In 1914, only a year after the success of New York's terra cotta-clad Woolworth Building, Willis Polk sheathed the Hobart Building, at 592 Market, entirely in terra cotta with dense ornament.

For a variety of reasons, terra cotta became the dominant cladding material for tall buildings constructed in San Francisco between 1920 and the Depression. The first reason was its light weight. The material could be manufactured in hollow blocks whose cell walls were only one to two inches thick. These blocks could be laid up against common brick masonry efficiently, and tied back to the masonry with thin steel wires. By contrast, stone facings of the time were at least four inches thick, and their metal anchors were correspondingly heavy.

A second reason for the popularity of terra cotta lay in the quality of its manufacture, which rose as temperature-controlled kilns and perfectly mixed clays were developed. Identical blocks for uniform bays between steel columns could be designed, formed, baked, glazed, and delivered to the site predictably, without the hand finishing that stone masonry still required.

A third, and most important, reason for choice of the material lay in its expressive possibilities. The variety of color, texture, and sheen available to surface terra cotta was limited only by the number of glazes which could be fired onto baked clay. If a designer sought a stone-like appearance, he could be assured of a material which accurately simulated the visual quality of stone. If he wished to emphasize color or reflectivity, he could obtain an appearance never available in stone or brick.

The architects of the PG&E General Office Building, Bakewell & Brown, took advantage of these qualities. They sheathed the main elevations in terra cotta with a "Granitex" finish, so called because it matches the color and texture of Sierra white granite. This finish appears to symbolize institutional permanence in Bakewell & Brown's designs, for they had used real granite on City Hall, and Brown was later to use Granitex again on San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building. Some 1,010 tons of the terra cotta, together with matching Granitex-finished bricks, were supplied to clad this office building, the sixth largest such order filled by Gladding, McBean for San Francisco between 1896 and 1932.

Bakewell & Brown also particularized the building's visual character with specific symbolic references to PG&E, executed in terra cotta. The 16th-floor urns have finials in the shape of gas flames. Keystones of the base arcade display the head of bighorn sheep, chosen by sculptor Edgar Walter to symbolize the High Sierra, source of PG&E's hydroelectric power. Walter's sculptural group over the entrance symbolizes California and the company with fruit swags and the head and paws of a California grizzly bear, two heroic figures of the utility's workforce, and other representations of hydroelectric power.

The architects themselves recorded the significance of terra cotta in their design of this building:

> The treatment of the terra-cotta wall surface in rusticated courses serves two very useful purposes, one practical and one aesthetic. Large blocks of terra-cotta have a tendency to warp and twist in the process of making. The small grooves of the rustication break up the continuity of the surface, and the wavy appearance that would be apparent if the wall were absolutely of one surface is lost. These small grooves form continuous lines entirely around the building, carrying from one side of each window or opening to the other, and are of great assistance in tying the masses together...In order to make the ornament, the 14th-story arcade, and other architectural detail appear to the best advantage, the use of a light-colored material was advisable. The most delicate ornament shows clearly, every line is revealed distinctly, and each shadow imparts its full impression on the light granite-grey color chosen. /2

Architecture: Pair with Matson Building

Two terra cotta-clad tall office buildings fill the block on the south side of Market Street from Main Street to Beale: the Matson Building and the PG&E General Office Building (both are being nominated concurrently for Register listing). Although the latter is one story taller than the Matson Building, they complement each other admirably. The heights of all the stories match. The belt courses separating "shaft" from "base" and "capital" are aligned from one building to the other. Both have three stories of the base articulated as a single colonnade (Matson) or arcade (PG&E), consisting of three bays on either side of each building's arched, four-story grand entry. The "capital" of each includes another three-story arcade. Both have magnificent but contrasting cornices at the 15th story, and PG&E's additional story is set back from this to reduce its visual importance. Both are clad in rusticated terra cotta blocks of about the same size, which differ but harmonize in texture and color. The two buildings share the use of classically inspired ornamentation popular with owners and Beaux Arts-trained architects (Matson in 1922 by Bliss & Faville, PG&E in 1923 by Bakewell & Brown), the two office buildings were clearly intended as a complementary pair. Because of the fineness of its detailing, the coherence of the classical vocabulary it shares with the adjoining building, and its aesthetic unity, the PG&E General Office Building emerges as exemplary in its own time and highly significant in ours.

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2. Quoted in Kurutz, *Architectural Terra Cotta of Gladding, McBean* (Sausalito, CA: Windgate Press, 1989), 101.

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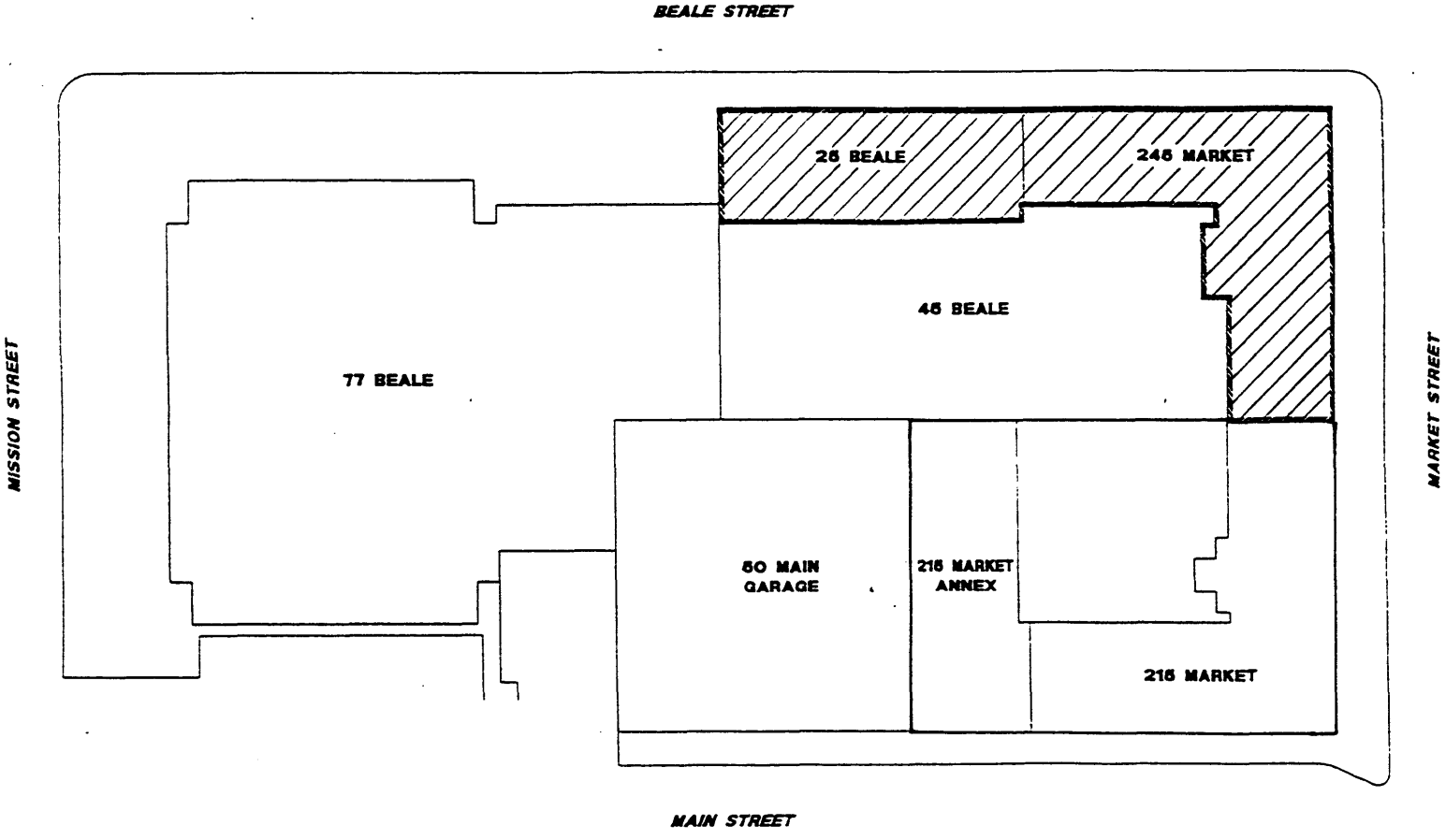


Figure 16: Site Plan
The PG&E General Office Building and Annex are delineated by the hatched lines.

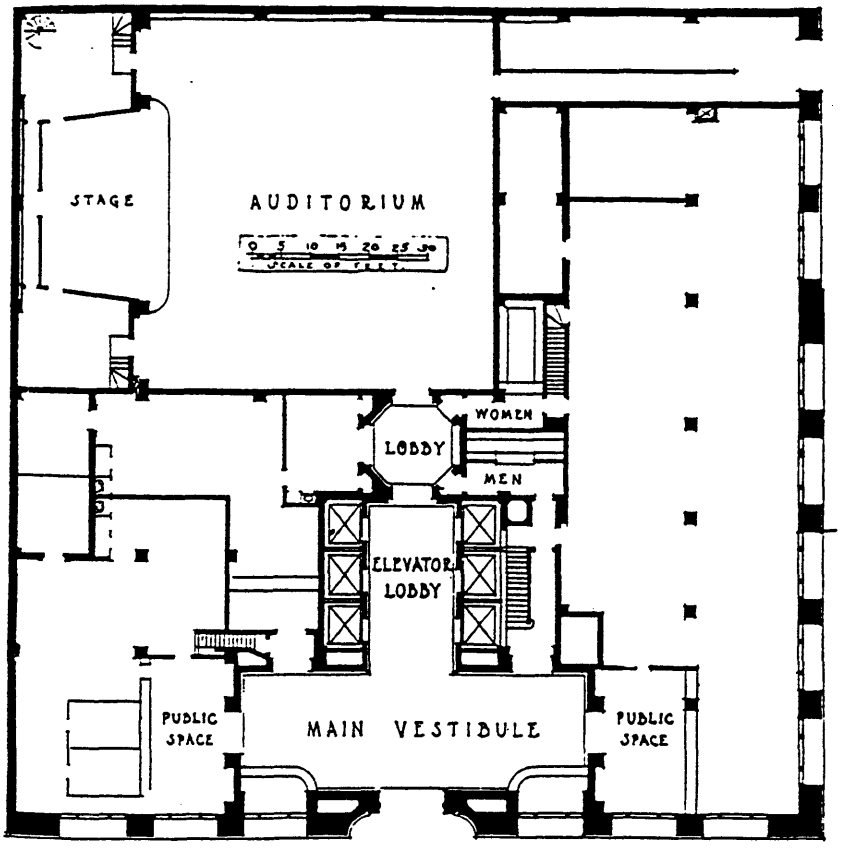


Figure 17: Floor Plan, 1920s

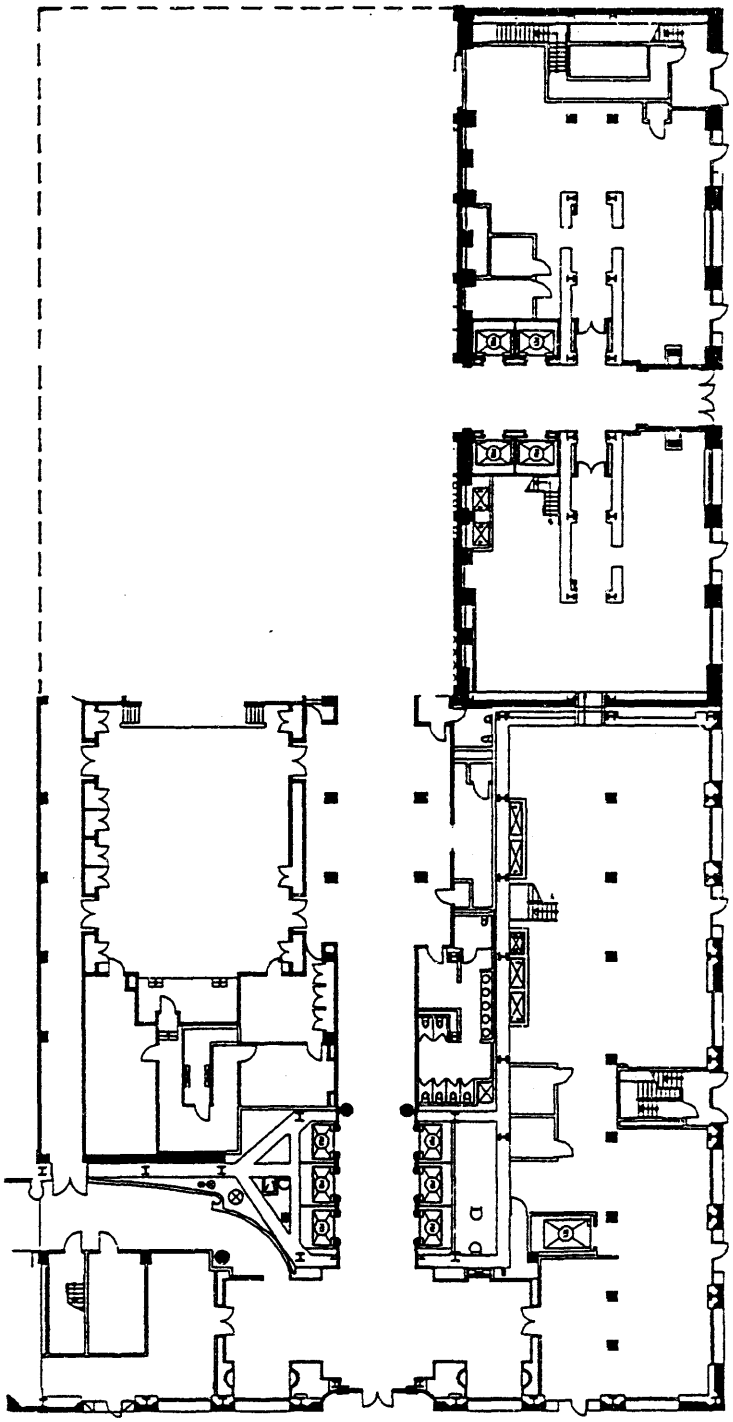


Figure 18: Floor Plan, 1995, showing alterations

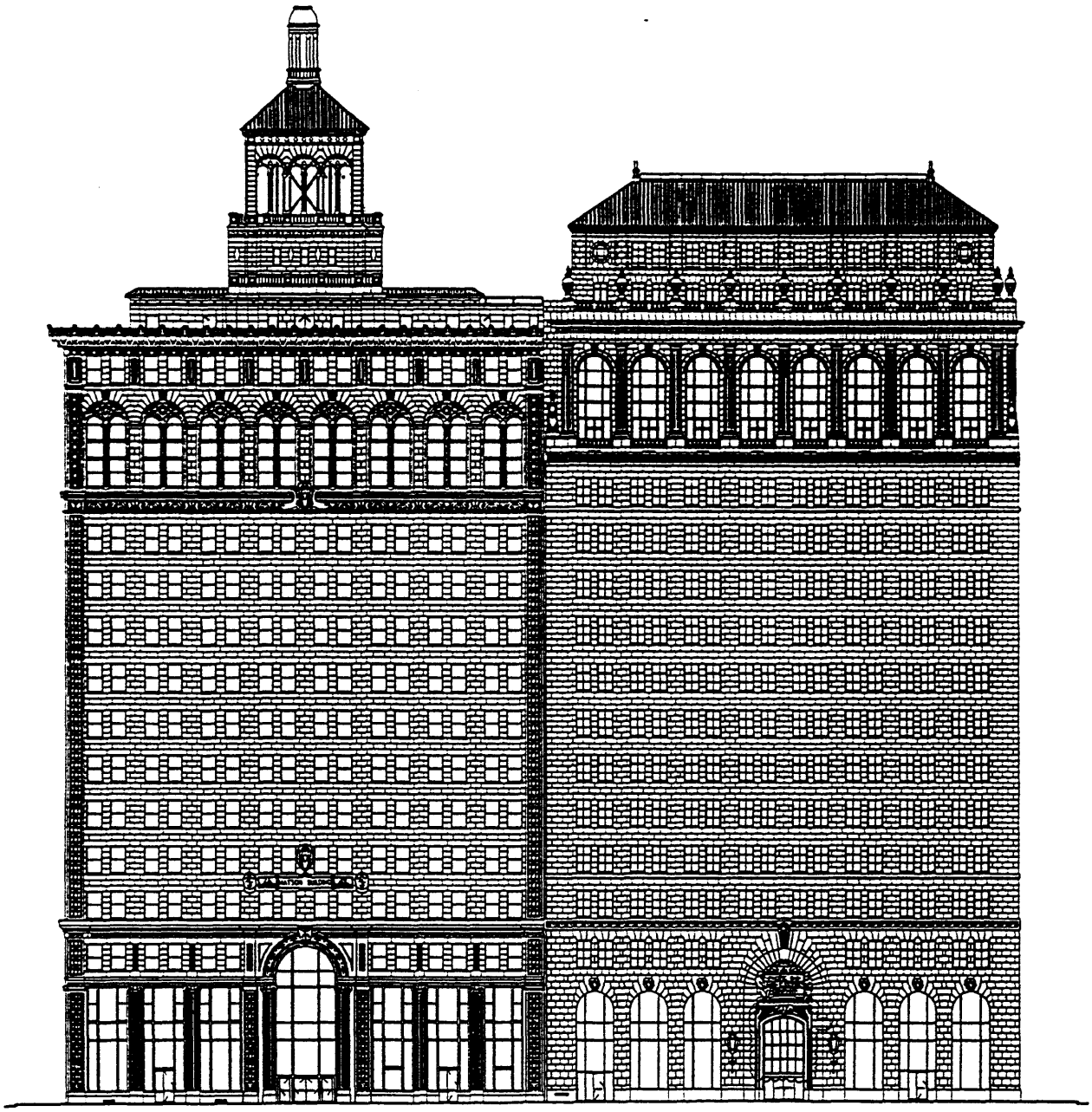


Figure 19: North Elevation on Market Street, 1995

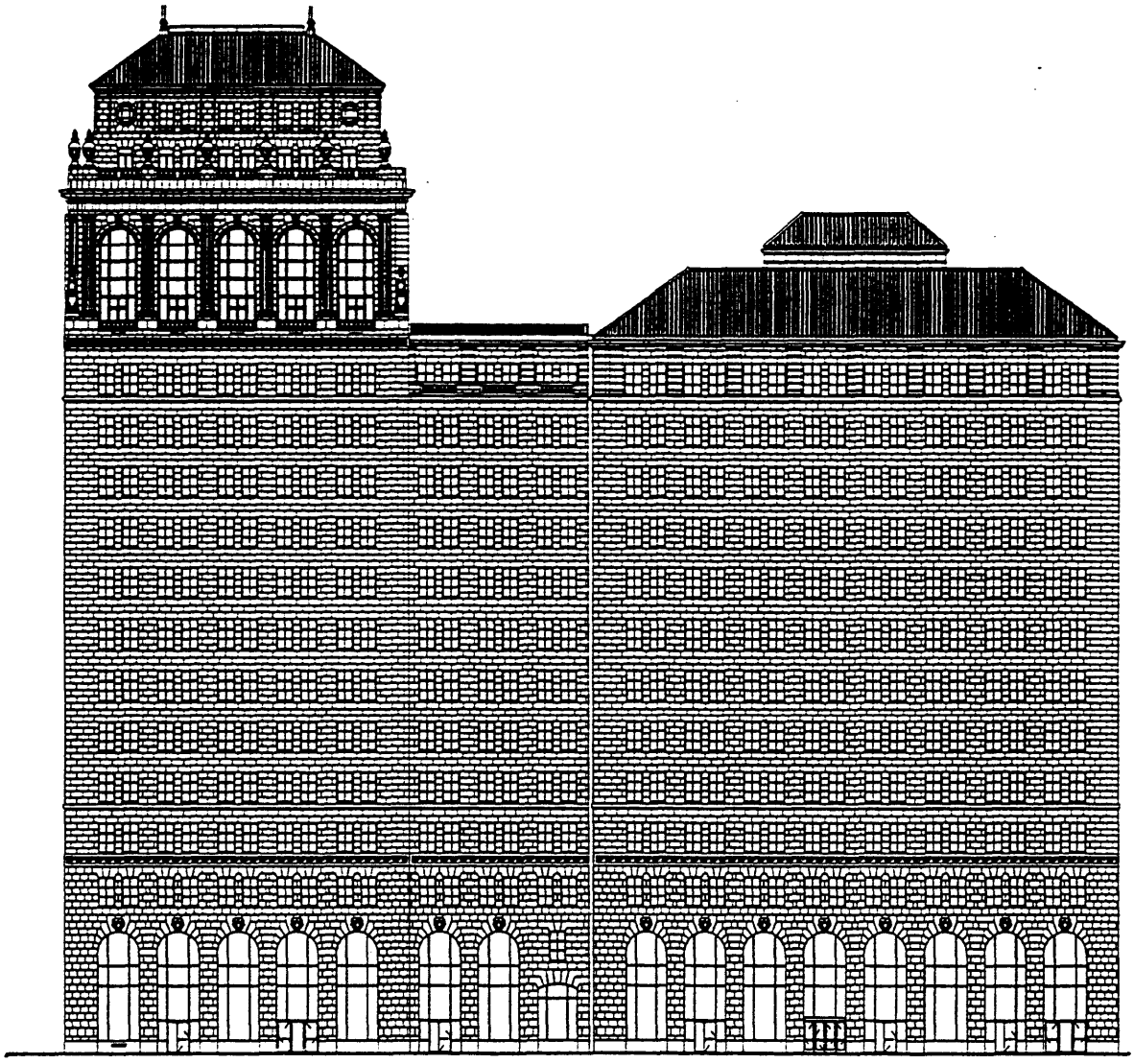


Figure 20: West Elevation on Beale Street, 1995

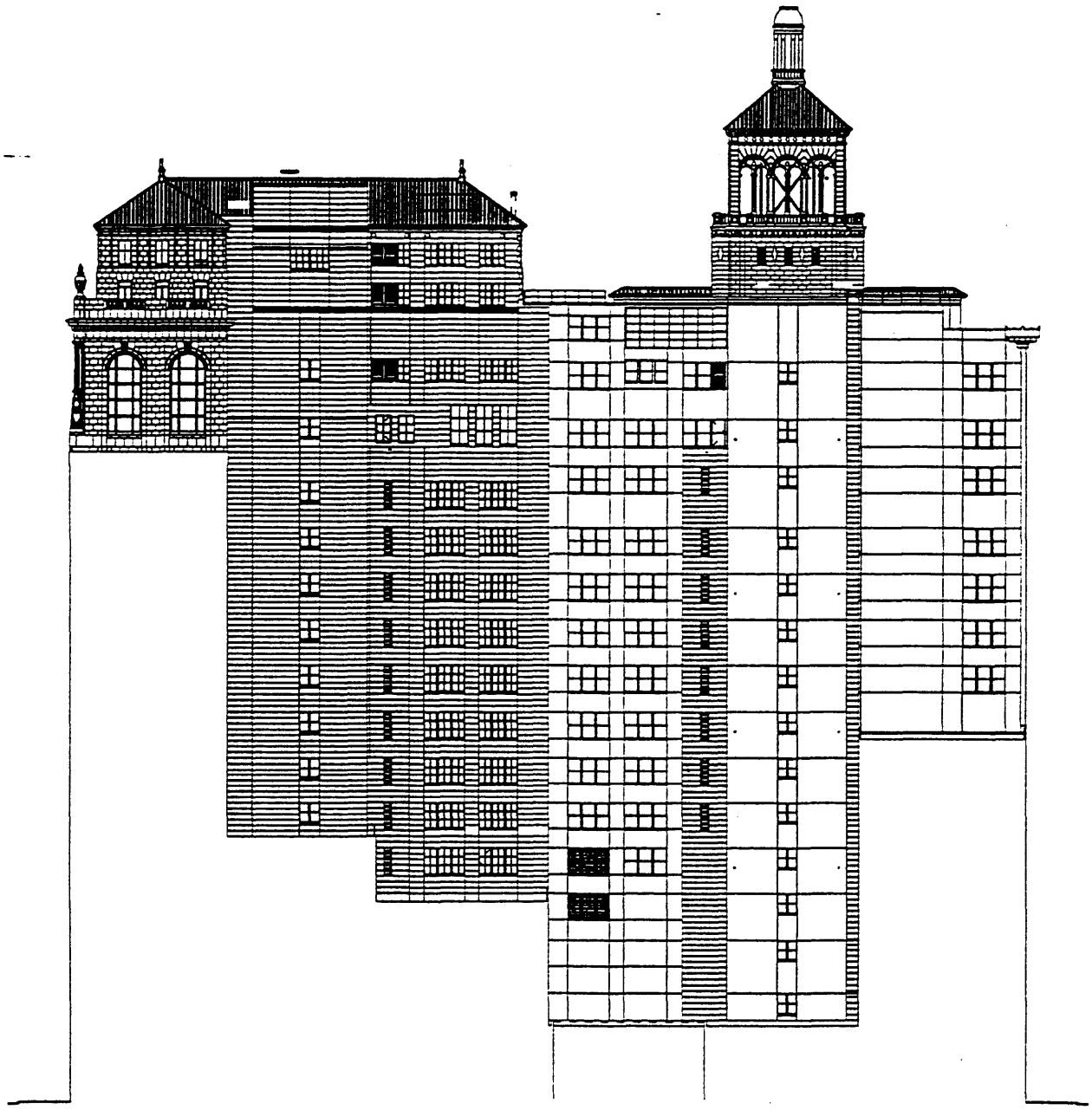


Figure 21: South Elevation, Courtyard, 1995

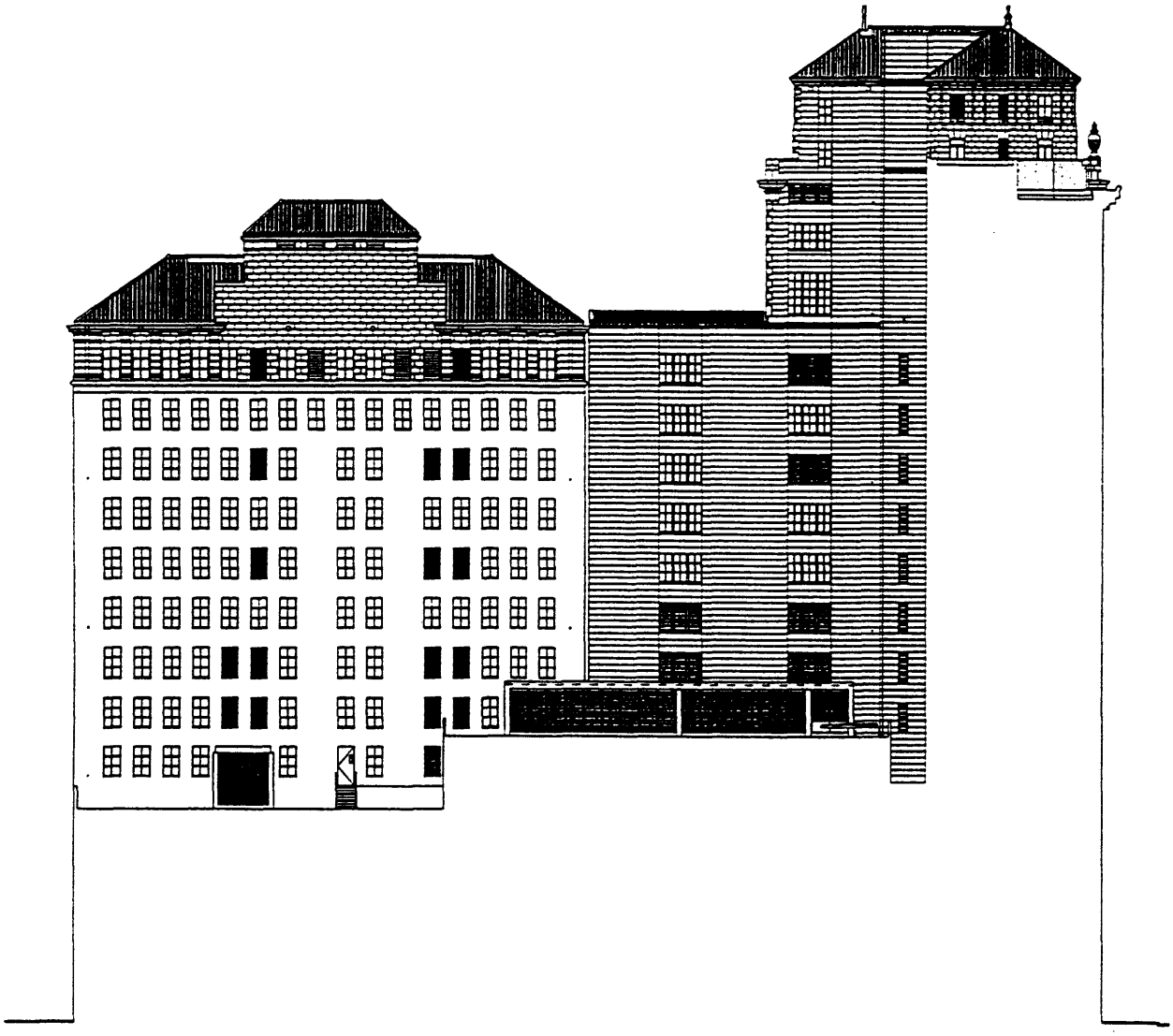


Figure 22: East Elevation, Courtyard, 1995

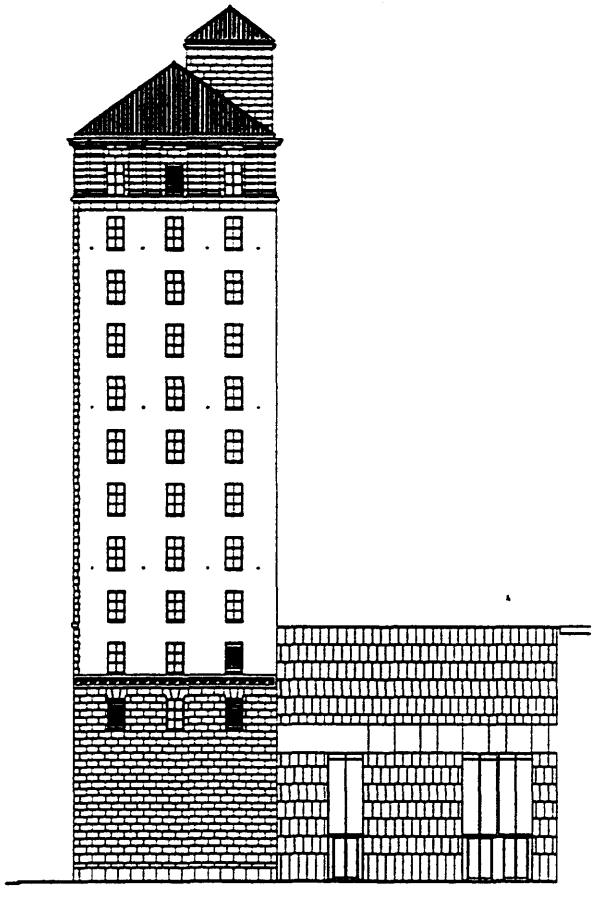
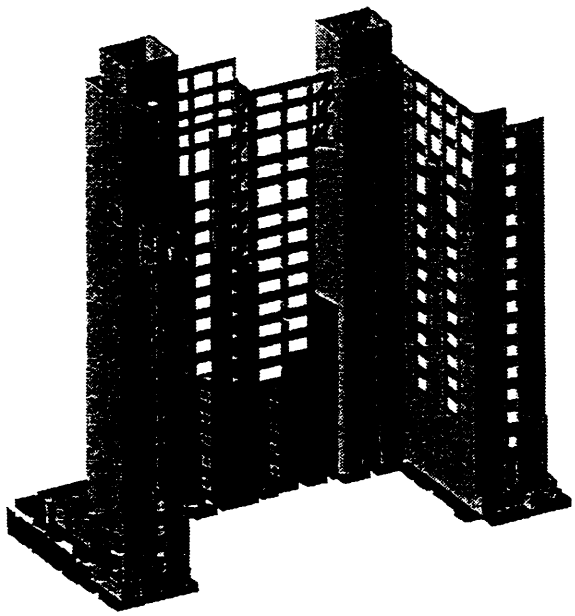


Figure 23: South Elevation, Annex, 1995



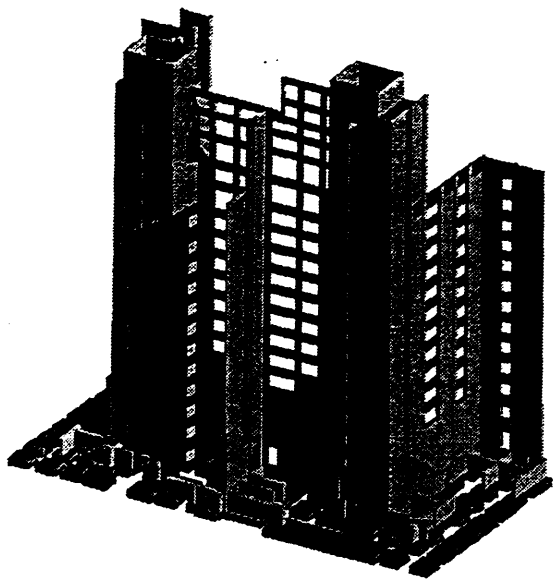


Figure 24: Structural Diagram, 1995
Diagram shows new courtyard wall system. Shaded walls represent existing structure which was strengthened with new concrete walls.

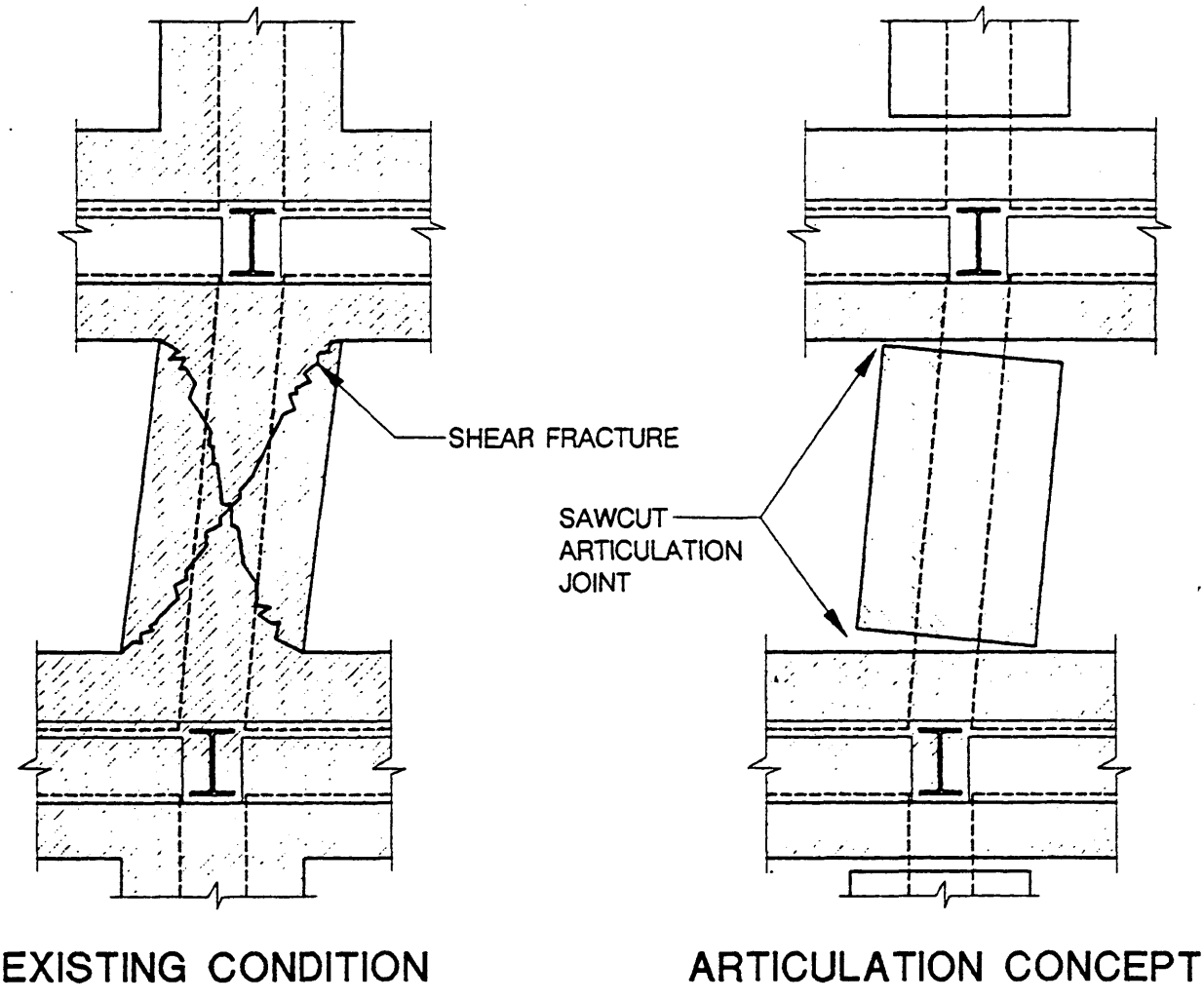


Figure 25: Structural Diagram, 1995.
Diagram shows elevation of typical facade pier, illustrating different responses to lateral deformation after articulation of relieving joints at terra cotta blocks.