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OMB No. 1024-0018

NPS Form 10-900

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Austin Fire Drill Tower  
Other name/site number: Buford Tower & Kitchens Memorial Chimes  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 201 West Cesar Chavez Street  
City or town: Austin State: Texas County: Travis  
Not for publication:  Vicinity:

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 forth 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 at the following levels of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 8/22/16  
Signature of certifying official / Title Date  
Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Lee Eason H. Beall 10.11.16  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

	Private
<b>X</b>	Public - Local
	Public - State
	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

<b>X</b>	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

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

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** Government: fire station (firemen's training tower)

**Current Functions:** Other: Electronic Bell Tower

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Revivals: Italian Renaissance

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Brick and cast stone

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-7)

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X	<b>C</b>	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.
	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** N/A

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture

**Period of Significance:** 1930

**Significant Dates:** 1930

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): N/A

**Architect/Builder:** Hugo F. Kuehne Sr. & J. Roy White, Architects; Rexford D. Kitchens, Builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-11)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheet 9-12)

**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 (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government : Austin History Center, Austin Public Library
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property:** less than 1 acre

### Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 30.263650° Longitude: -97.745957°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated property is a portion of “ABS 316 SUR 5 GOCHER S ACR 3.68 SAND BEACH RESERVE” as indicated in the Travis County maps. It is located at Shoal Beach at Town Lake Metropolitan Park. The nominated property’s boundary forms a semi-circular parcel. It begins in the northwest corner, which is defined by the junction of the planter bed and the concrete pavement. The boundary then continues east along the W. Caesar Chavez St.—a route which is defined by a lamp post followed by a string of ten bollards with a water hydrant, followed by a signal post—and ends at the junction of the planter bed defining the northeast corner. The boundary then goes south along the foot / bike path, following the material difference line (i.e., concrete to paver blocks) until it reaches the eastern bollard of the railing. This semi-circular railing then forms the southern boundary of the land parcel. The boundary then continues along the material difference line and connects to the point of beginning, the planter bed on the northwest corner. This boundary is also indicated by a heavy line drawn on Map 4, page 17.

**Boundary Justification:** The nomination includes the historic Fire Drill Tower and its immediate surrounding.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Vishal Joshi, Graduate Student  
Organization: The University of Texas at Austin  
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Date: December 2014

## Additional Documentation

- Maps** (see continuation sheet Map-13 through Map-15)
- Additional items** (see continuation sheets Figure-16 through Figure-26)
- Photographs** (see log on page 5 and continuation sheets Photo-27 through Photo-37)

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Photographs**

Austin Fire Drill Tower  
Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photographed by Vishal Joshi, September 17, 2014 (interiors) and November 23rd, 2014 (exterior)

Photo 1: North façade. Camera facing south.

Photo 2: West façade. Camera facing east.

Photo 3: South façade. Camera facing north.

Photo 4: East façade. Camera facing west.

Photo 5: The 100-year Flood Plain Marker on the west side of the tower. Camera facing east.

Photo 6: North elevation, door grill detail. Camera facing south.

Photo 7: Sixth floor interior and carillon. Camera facing northwest.

Photo 8: Fourth floor interior steel staircase. Camera facing southeast.

Photo 9: Third floor window. Camera facing northwest.

Photo 10: The north face of the tower, as seen from Colorado and 2nd streets. Camera facing south, toward Lady Bird Lake.

Photo 11: Detail, fifth and sixth floors.

**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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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## Description

The 1930 Austin Fire Drill Tower (currently known as Buford Tower) stands on the banks of Lady Bird Lake, in stark contrast to the surrounding modern buildings in the heart of downtown Austin, Texas. The six-story brick tower was designed by architects Hugo F. Kuehne, Sr. and J. Roy White for the Austin Fire Department, and constructed by the Rex D. Kitchens Construction Company. The Italianate Style building was conceived for training Austin's firemen and was specifically designed to facilitate their regular drills. The tower has a square plan, and a shaft topped by a hipped roof, and is a prominent feature of the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail. The tower, which was on the verge of demolition, was restored by the Austin Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction in 1978.

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The Austin Fire Drill Tower is located a few feet south of the junction of West Cesar Chavez and Colorado streets in downtown Austin. Due to its proximity to these main streets, its immediate surroundings include street signals on either edge of its north-facing façade, as well as street signs, a chain of bollards, and a fire hydrant. The tower faces high-rises located on the other side of east-west artery, including residential and commercial towers, and the Austin City Hall. To the west of the tower stands the 100-year flood plain marker. On its southern edge, the tower stands adjacent to a semi-circular pedestrian/cycle path approximately thirty feet wide which gives way to the sloping banks of the Lady Bird Lake and the Hike and Bike Trail. Immediately around the rim of the tower to the south is a landscaped lawn. It is this unique setting between the skyscrapers of downtown Austin and the wide open swath of Lady Bird Lake that makes it a focal point of the city.<sup>1</sup>

The Fire Drill Tower is six stories in height and measures 67 feet tall. Its footprint is approximately 14 feet by 14 feet. The tower has a concrete frame structure which is clad with red and brown brick veneer in the stretcher bond style. It sits on a four-foot high, white concrete plinth. The main door and all other windows on the facades have semi-circular arches, articulated by brick. The arched windows have a concrete sill. The uppermost level (sixth) is separated from the rest of the building by a stone cornice highlighted by corbelled bricks. Above this feature is a stone, double-arched opening supported by a central stone column and brick pilasters on either side. Immediately above this floor is the tiled roof, which is defined by corbelled brick masonry. The contrast of the white base, the red bricks, stone cornices and columns, and arched openings provide a distinctive Italianate character to the tower.

The main entrance to the tower is on the north, accessed by three steps. The main door and the arched openings above are centered to the façade, one right above the other. The Romanesque door is surrounded by a brick arch with a brick key stone giving it its defining look. The entrance first has an elaborately designed black, cast iron grill door followed by the wooden main door. On either side of this door are intricately carved cast iron light fixtures. To the right of the door is a plaque commemorating James Buford which reads as follows:

IN THE MEMORY OF  
CAPTAIN JAMES L. BUFORD  
WHO GAVE HIS LIFE  
IN THE LINE OF DUTY  
IN SERVICE TO  
THE CITIZENS OF AUSTIN  
NO GREATER LOVE

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<sup>1</sup>Lady Bird Lake is a reservoir that was formed in 1960 with the damming of the Colorado River. Prior to 2007 it was called Town Lake.

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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To the left of the door is another cast iron plaque which contains the following inscription:

BUFORD TOWER & KITCHENS MEMORIAL CHIMES  
A RENOVATION PROJECT SPONSORED BY  
AUSTIN CHAPTER NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION  
AND  
MRS. REX D. KITCHENS  
CONSTRUCTED 1930  
DEDICATED 1978

Above the door are four arched windows, one on each floor. Originally completely open to facilitate the flow of oxygen to the intentionally-set training fires, the 1978 renovation introduced fixed, multi-pane glazing to these openings, primarily to protect the tower from the elements and from roosting birds. The top level (sixth floor) is separated by a stone cornice band supported by corbelled brick masonry. Above this cornice are two semi-circular stone arched openings supported by an ornate circular stone column with a circular base and a stylized floral capital at the center. On either sides of these two arches are square brick pilasters with a square stone base and a stylized floral capital. This entire feature together is recessed from the wall plane by a few inches. The openings, once fully open, are now filled with mesh metal and cast iron grill. Above this feature is a line of corbelled bricks topped by the hipped, red tile roof.

The east and west façades are entirely similar to each other. There is the distinctive white band of the plinth, exactly above which is the semi-circular brick arched window, whose lintel seems to match that of the main door. This is followed by four semi-circular arched windows placed equidistant from each other on the façade. Above that is the corbelled brick work supporting the stone cornice, followed by the stone, paired arched openings supported by a circular stone column in the center and square pilasters on either side. Above this is the corbelled brick cornice supporting the hipped, red tile roof. The first floor window openings on these facades originally held multi-pane sash windows, while the ones above were completely open. All openings are filled with a fixed acrylic glazing that mimics the multi-pane design. The south façade is similar to the east and west facades, but lacks a window on the first floor.

### **Interior**

The first floor has hexagonal paved blocks as its flooring. The walls are painted white. The windows have acrylic sheets with equally spaced stiles, mimicking a multi-pane design. The ceiling is lowered at this level by a false ceiling. A set of concrete steps lead to the next floor. The second floor has exposed concrete flooring. The walls are of exposed brick, with windows sealed up by acrylic having again the look of multi-pane windows, followed by the bare concrete ceiling. This floor has the electronic carillon's monitoring system. The third, fourth, and fifth floors are all similar to each other. They are all interconnected by a steel staircase. Each has exposed concrete flooring. Each also has exposed brick walls and a bare concrete ceiling. The sixth floor is rather unique. The steel staircase stops a few steps below the sixth floor slab, which is then connected to this floor by a wooden attic door. This floor has exposed concrete flooring. The walls on this level have the double arched openings which have been sealed off by an iron grill and a net in an attempt to keep the birds out. This floor has the speakers of the electronic carillon. The walls are of exposed brick. The ceiling is made up of wooden planks concealing the wooden rafters above.

Buford Tower has been a part of the Austin cityscape for more than eighty years. Due to the intense development of downtown Austin, the setting has been somewhat compromised, but is still urban in character. The only alterations are the insertion of glazing in the window openings, and the iron grills at the ground-level door and sixth floor openings. These changes are very much in character with the original Italianate style of the building and do not detract from its overall character.

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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### Statement of Significance

The Austin Fire Drill Tower (now known as Buford Tower) was constructed on the banks of the Colorado River in 1930 as a practice tower for the Austin Fire Department, and served its intended function for more than four decades. The tower was central in the training of fire fighters, and was prominently sited in the heart of downtown to allow public display of the trainees' skills and techniques. The Italianate Style building was designed by two of Austin's most prominent architects, Hugo F. Kuehne and J. Roy White. The tower was also a significant step in Austin's beautification plan, and is now an iconic landmark along a popular hike and bike trail. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is 1930, the year of its construction.

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At the turn of the century, Austin was primarily a government and education center. A series of failed industrialization and infrastructure projects had left the city deep in debt and city services were neglected as a result. In 1908, the citizens voted to replace the alderman form of government with a commission government. Modest progress was made, but in 1924 Austin voted to adopt the council-manager form of government, which escalated efforts to beautify the city and to undertake a comprehensive city plan for the first time since 1839. "A City Plan for Austin, Texas" was completed by the Dallas-based firm Koch & Fowler in 1928. It called for the city to develop its strengths as a residential, cultural, and educational center. A \$4.25 million bond issue provided funds for streets, sewers, parks, and a wide variety of other civic improvements.

Austin citizens voted to establish a paid fire department in 1916. Prior to this, services had been provided by multiple volunteer fire companies. The following year, the department employed 35 firefighters, and administered five motorized fire trucks, an automobile for the fire chief, and three pieces of horse-drawn equipment. Eight stations were located throughout the city, with an additional station was added in 1929. The Central Station was located next to City Hall at the corner of 8th and Colorado streets, seven blocks directly north of where the Fire Drill Tower would be constructed in 1930.

### The Austin Fire Drill Tower, 1930-1974

The 1930 Austin Fire Drill Tower was the city's first such tower, and demonstrates local government's efforts to modernize and professionalize fire protection services in the city. In addition, the building's pleasing design and prominent location at the foot of Colorado Street at the north bank of the Colorado River contributed to the city beautification plan. "A City Plan for Austin, Texas" by Koch & Fowler in 1928 proposed that an

important property which is available to the City of Austin for park development is the Colorado River Banks. A considerable area of the Colorado River banks, especially on the north side of the river, is now owned by the State of Texas and provisions should immediately be made for its acquisition by the City of Austin, so that this property can be developed into one large park and a system of beautification can be started.<sup>2</sup>

The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show that this area earlier had a machine shop, a lumber warehouse, cold storage units and ice factories. These buildings were cleared out to make way for Lamar Park per the 1928 city plan. The tower was planted above the 100-year flood plain of the river, which was unpredictable before dams were built. This was an ideal location for the tower, as water from the Colorado River could be used to test hoses and douse test fires.<sup>3</sup> The surrounding area developed into a warehouse district.

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<sup>2</sup> "A City Plan for Austin, Texas," Koch & Fowler, consulting engineers, 1928.

<sup>3</sup> *GO* – article on tower, July 1970 – courtesy Austin History Center.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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At the December 26, 1929 City Council meeting, Councilman Panell moved that the city manager should be authorized to secure bids for the building of a drill tower for the fire department in accordance with the plans submitted by Architect Kuehne.<sup>4</sup> In 1930, the six-story tower was built on the banks of the Colorado River at the cost of \$6,200.<sup>5</sup> According to the 1930 city manager's report, the tower was built with the money from the Fire Station Bond Fund. It was not just built for the needed training purposes, but also because it was saving the city from paying a five percent penalty on their fire insurance rate, amounting to approximately \$18,000.<sup>6</sup>

The tower was designed as a fire drill tower for the practicing firemen. A number of fire hydrants were placed around its periphery which were used to test hose pipes and demonstrate its use to incoming novice firemen. The tower also provided opportunities for the fire department to display the skills of its fire fighters to bystanders, who were often drawn to the burning structure during practice fires. The tower also gave the department a place to launch and test new equipment, and served as the perfect background for group photographs and other social events organized for the firemen.

The tower consisted of six one-room brick stories having an internal metal staircase, as well as a basement which was generally used for practice fires and occasionally inundated to train the firemen to tackle floods. The tower in its original condition had no window glazing in its arched openings. This facilitated the flow of oxygen, which accelerated intentionally-set practice fires, but also allowed the firemen to scale the walls for rescue drills and perform aerial ladder works. The six-story height of the tower certainly helped the firemen prepare for situations that might occur in the city's center, which was increasingly home to buildings of greater and greater height. The tower was burnt regularly for 43 years, providing a regular in downtown Austin.

By the mid-1960s, the city fire department was well-equipped and advanced in its fire-fighting technology. In 1966, the city purchased a \$50,000 snorkel truck with a connected basket joined to a hydraulic boom. The snorkel could be raised 75 feet high and could also be extended 39 feet horizontally.<sup>7</sup> This allowed the firefighters the much-needed freedom from ladders that were limited by the size of individual trucks. The sophisticated snorkel managed to dwarf the tower during its first exhibition in front of the old structure. As a result of advances in fire-fighting technology, the tower was slowly becoming obsolete. Additionally, its location was no longer as remote as it had been originally and was in the heart of a growing and busy downtown. Finally, in 1974 when the Austin Fire Department moved to the new training tower at 517 S. Pleasant Valley Road, the Fire Drill Tower was closed.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Tower's Restoration**

The Austin Fire Drill Tower ceased operations in 1974 when the new fire training center opened about 2.5 miles east of downtown. After being abandoned for nearly four years and undisturbed by regular human activity, the tower stood with its arched windows wide open, eventually becoming a six-story pigeon coop. Its condition deteriorated and soon was marked for demolition. When the threat to pull it down was declared, there was a huge collective effort by the people of Austin to save it. In 1978, Effie Kitchens—the wife of the tower's original contractor—led a campaign to restore the tower. Mrs. Kitchens stated that this was her late husband's first job when he got into the construction business during the Depression, and expressed her desire to save it both for nostalgic reasons and for the tower's historical importance.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Regular Meeting of the City Council" – dated December 26, 1929, courtesy Austin History Center.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.austinfiremuseum.org/blog/chronological-history/> accessed November 17, 2014

<sup>6</sup> 1930 City Managers Report, courtesy Austin History Center.

<sup>7</sup> "Snorkel for Firefighters," *American Statesman*, December 11, 1966. On file at the Austin History Center.

<sup>8</sup> "Bells will toll along Town Lake," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 4, 1977, on file at the Austin History Center.

<sup>9</sup> Builder Review – "A bright future ahead for the beacon on Town Lake" – Pg. 12 dated May 1978, courtesy Austin History Center

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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The cost of this project was estimated to be \$45,000, of which Mrs. Kitchens contributed to the restoration of the tower and also gave personal funds to purchase and install the carillon.<sup>10</sup> Kitchens Construction Co. was the contractor of the project, also providing the much-needed materials and labor. J. Roy White, a member of the original design team, was assigned to the tower again as its restoration architect. Austin preservation architect Wayne Bell designed the elaborate ornamental gates in front of the older wooden doors and the grillwork that encloses the sixth-story windows.

The Austin Chapter of Women in Construction joined the effort and launched a city-wide campaign to raise the final \$15,000 for the restoration work. A sign board was set up next to the tower announcing the effort, and pamphlets were distributed to potential supporters. Once the payment was made, donors received 'Appreciation Cards' which read, "When you pass by the renovated structure we know you will feel rewarded and pleased to have been a part of the restoration process."<sup>11</sup>

As part of the restoration project, the brick façade was cleaned, the roof was repaired, glazing was inserted into the window openings, and iron grills were installed at the front doors and in the uppermost window openings. The restoration also included the installation of a carillon which produced bell-like chimes and songs electronically. Thus, the tower was given a much needed makeover and a new function altogether. Jack Robinson, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, pointed out that no city money was involved in this endeavor.<sup>12</sup>

On August 23, 1978 the old fire practice tower was officially named Buford Tower and Kitchens Memorial Chimes. Fire department Captain James L. Buford had died June 16, 1972, when he was overcome by floods trying to save a young boy from the swollen Shoal Creek, making him the first Austin fireman to have died in the line of duty since the establishment of the department. In addition to functioning as a carillon tower, the building has assumed another significant role in the community as the site of the Austin Firefighters Association's annual 9/11 memorial ceremony.

### Fire Training Towers as a Type

Found through the United States, fire training towers such as the Austin Fire Drill Tower mimic a range of architectural conditions and obstacles that fire fighters will most likely encounter, including height, stairs, doors, and rooms. The resulting constructions that almost look like common buildings.<sup>13</sup> Drill towers are typically isolated for safety reasons. However, tall slender towers accentuated with a good degree of ornamental detail had long been associated with American firehouses. Cultural and architectural historian Rebecca Zurier documents in *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History* that towers were a distinctive design component of firehouses in the mid and late-19<sup>th</sup> Century at a time when volunteer fire companies created elaborate, unique buildings meant to stand out. The tower provided a place for leather hoses to hang, drain, and dry so they would not rot. Zurier notes that "although these structures originally were built to serve a practical function, like towers on medieval palaces they offered another way to fly an architectural flag and call attention to the building from far away. Towers were often the most decorated part of the fire station." Interestingly, many were modeled after Italian campaniles (bell towers) such as those of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena and the Ducal Palace in Florence, "perhaps because the architects wanted their buildings to recall the palaces' historical functions as civic landmarks."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Bells will toll along Town Lake," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 4, 1977, on file at the Austin History Center.

<sup>11</sup> *Austin History Center* – James L. Buford Tower (AF- F1240) – Structure Check List, Donation request card, Appreciation Cards, Austin Texas Chapter National Association of Women in Construction dedication card (dated August 23, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> "Bells will toll along Town Lake," *Austin American-Statesman*, December 4, 1977, on file at the Austin History Center.

<sup>13</sup> <http://strangeharvest.com/obscure-design-typologies-fire-training-towers> accessed November 17, 2014

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Abbeville Press), 1982, pp. 57-65 and 113.

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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By the late 1920s many major cities in the U.S. had fire towers including the Seattle Fire Training Facility No. 14 (1926), Miami Fire Training Tower (1930), and San Francisco Fire Drill Tower (1930). Like Buford Tower, many of these buildings were designed with a much greater degree of architectural ornamentation than was technically required for one with such a utilitarian purpose, much less one that was to be regularly set ablaze and flooded with water. In the case of Austin's tower, though, its design helped to facilitate the beautification of what was intended to be new riverfront parkland and provided a picturesque backdrop for Austin's fire department to show off their evolving professional skill set in a very public forum, while demonstrating the city's commitment to public safety.

### Architects and Contractor

The firm of architect Hugo F. Kuehne, Sr. provided the plans for the fire drill tower. Kuehne was one of the foremost architects of Austin and played a significant role in city's architectural history. Born in Austin in 1884, he received a bachelor's degree in engineering from UT in 1906 and a bachelor's degree in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1908. He championed the cause to establish an architectural study course within the College of Engineering at UT on the basis of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In 1910 Kuehne established the School of Architecture in the College of Engineering, and served as its first professor. In 1915 he established his private firm. Kuehne's eclectic historicism shows in his early works such as the Ben M. Barker House (1921), the Austin Public Library (1933; NRHP 1993), and later in the Italianate style of the Buford Tower (1930). He is also known for designing the Bohn Brothers building at 517 Congress Avenue (1929), alterations for Brackenridge Hospital (1933), the Steck Building at 419 Congress (1932), the Commodore Perry Hotel (1950), the International Life Building (1952), the American National Bank, the Texas Department of Public Safety building (1952), and buildings for the Austin State Hospital.

Under Kuehne's direction, training architect J. Roy White prepared the tower's drawings. White had recently graduated from the University of Texas in 1929 with Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture, and the Austin Fire Drill Tower was one of his earliest projects.<sup>15</sup> During World War II, White completed numerous civic projects for the City of Austin. In 1943 he became associate architect of Giesecke, Kuehne & Brooks. In 1965 White became a part of a grand association of architects, with other distinguished architects namely R. Max Brooks, Howard D. Barr and David C. Graeber and formed the Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White (BBGW) architectural firm. The BBGW became Austin's largest and best known firms of its time.<sup>16</sup> The firm was chosen as the design contractor for the NASA Manned Spacecraft Centre in Houston in the 1960s. Further, as the architectural consultant to UT, the firm designed many buildings on campus, which included the Jester Center Dormitory Complex (1970) and Robert Lee Moore Hall (1972). Among the best known works of the firm in Austin are the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (1970) and the US Post Office and Federal Building (1965). In 1978, White's new firm— White, Dolce and Barr—oversaw the Buford Tower restoration.

Rex D. Kitchens, a lifelong resident of Travis County, was the contractor for the Fire Drill Tower and the project helped to establish his career. He became most well-known for his light weight pre-cast concrete structures and specialized in commercial and industrial building projects. In addition to the Fire Drill Tower, other notable examples of his work in Austin include the Commodore Perry Hotel (1950), Perry-Brooks Building (1952), and the Capital Plaza Shopping Center (1960). The Rex D. Kitchens Construction Co. also constructed the main building at Texas Technological College, as well as several of the Texas Instruments buildings.

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<sup>15</sup> Alexander Architecture Archive – Roy White folder: Interview of Roy White – dated July 22, 1982

<sup>16</sup> Austin Architecture – “Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White” – Pg. 80 (search for J. Roy White), courtesy Austin History Center

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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**Bibliography**

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Koch & Fowler, and Austin (Tex.), eds. *A City Plan for Austin, Texas*. Austin, Tex: Dept. of Planning, 1957. (reprint of 1928 plan).

Roy White folder: Interview of Roy White – dated July 22, 1982. Alexander Architecture Archive, University of Texas at Austin.

“Seattle Fire Station No. 14, Landmark Nomination Report.”  
<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/FireLevy/Stations/Station14-LandmarkA.PDF> accessed November 28, 2014.

“Secrets of the Buford Tower.” <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/lifestyles/the-secrets-of-the-buford-tower/nbQkc/#e1374684.3589408.735487> accessed September 11, 2014

Zurier, Rebecca. *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1982.

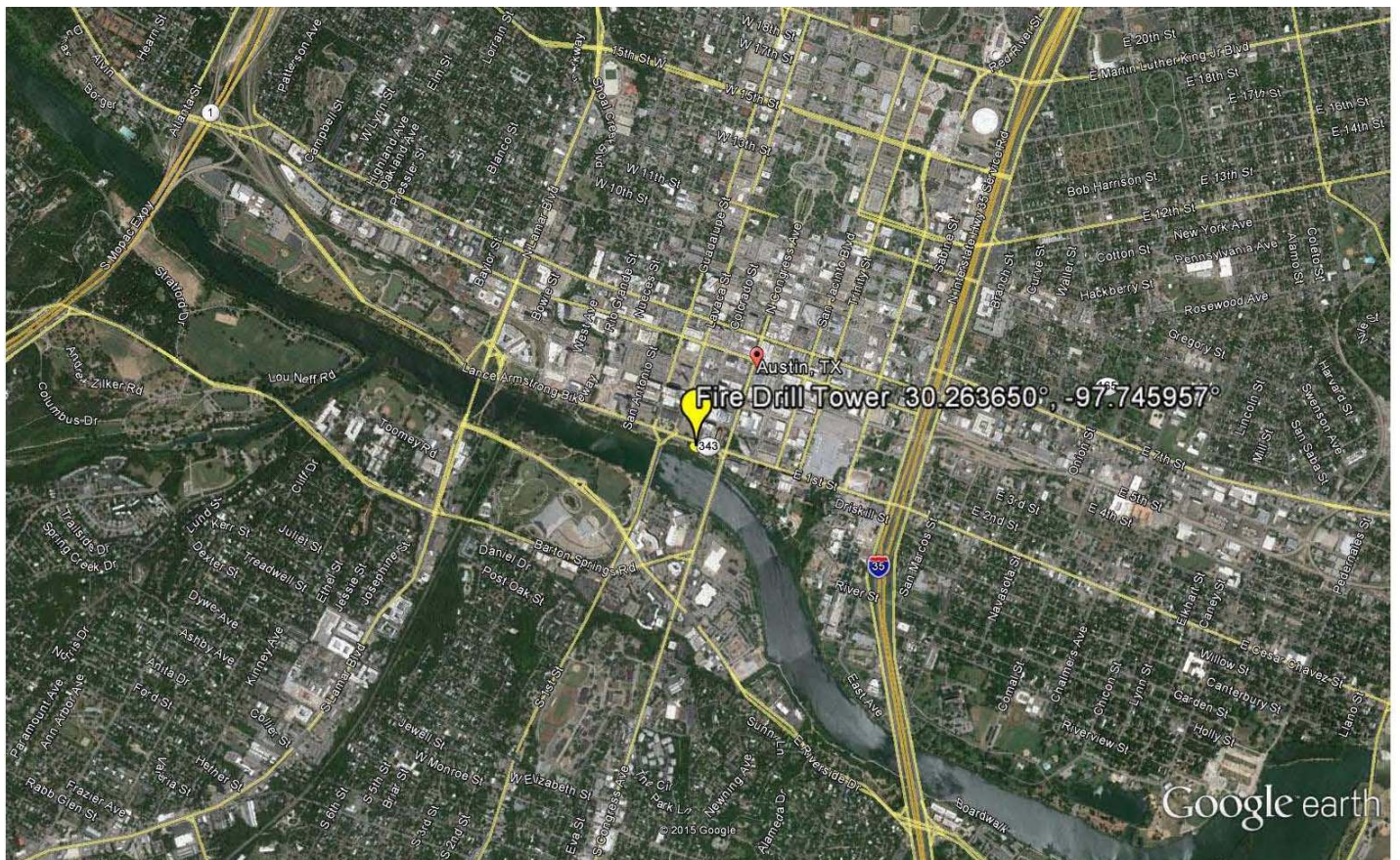


Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 1: Travis County (shaded) is located in central Texas.



Map 2: Scaled Google Earth map depicts the nominated property's location with downtown Austin.

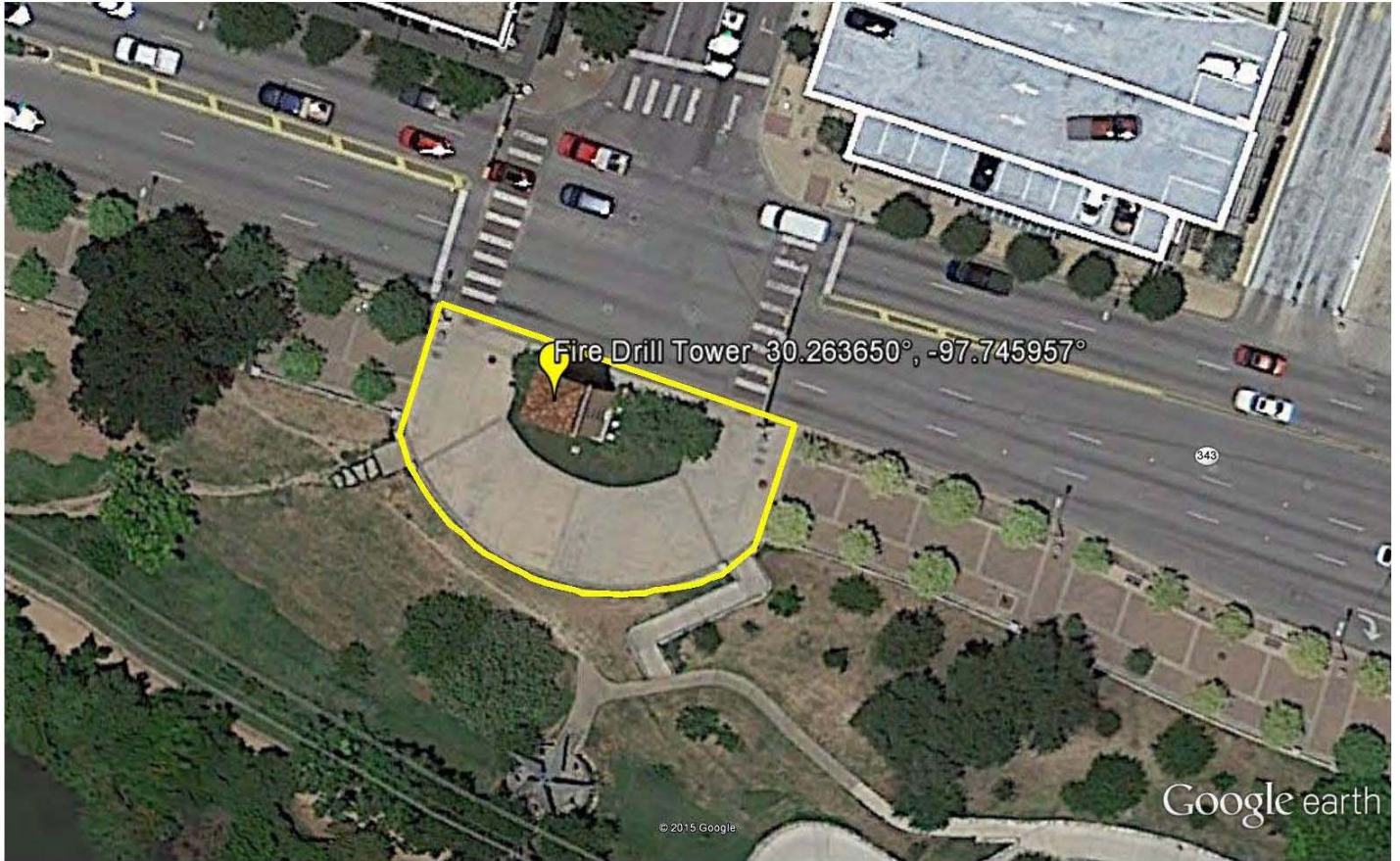


Map 3: Scaled Google Earth map depicts the nominated property's locational coordinates and boundary.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Source: Google Earth.

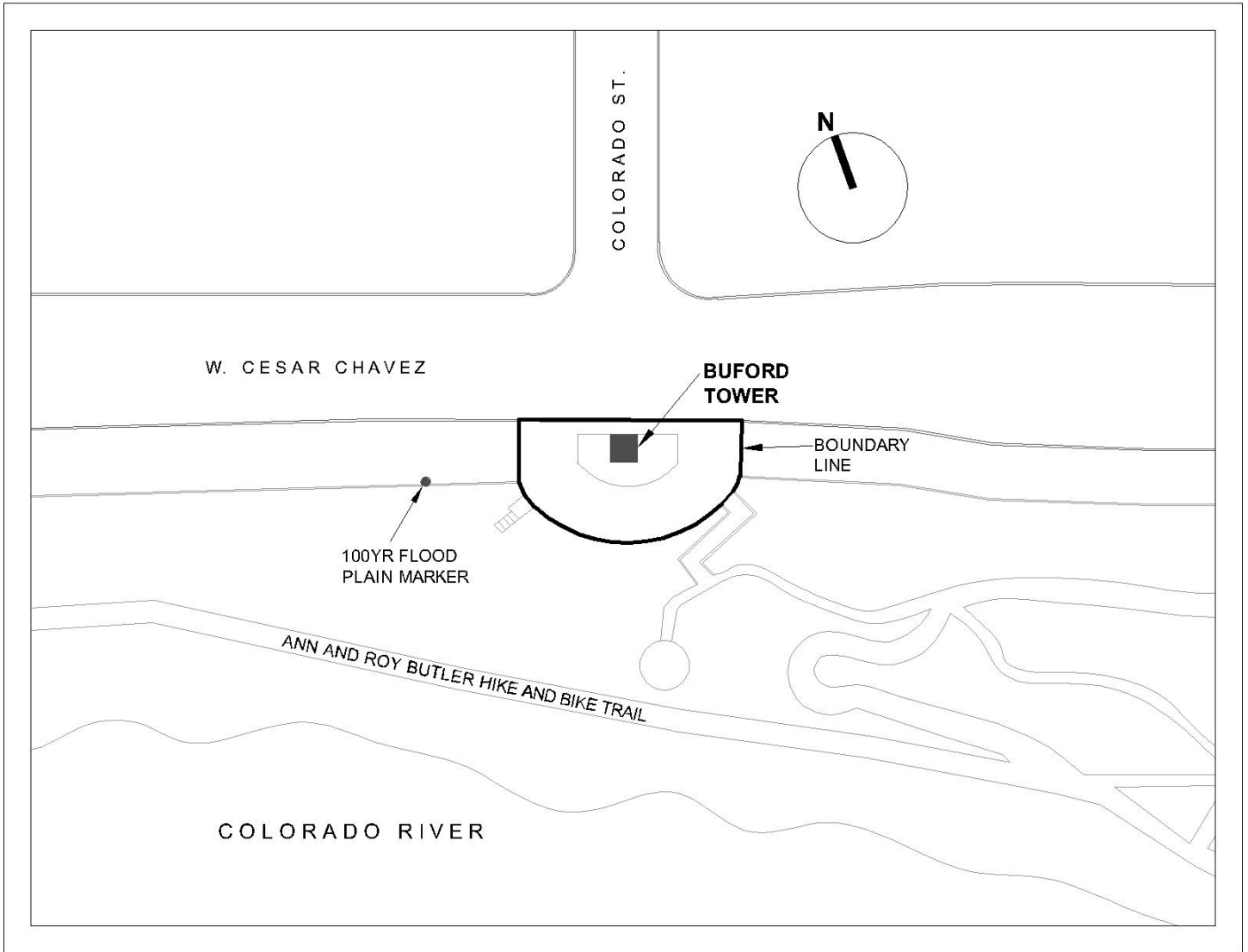


Google earth



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 4: Boundary for the nominated property is depicted by the heavy black line.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

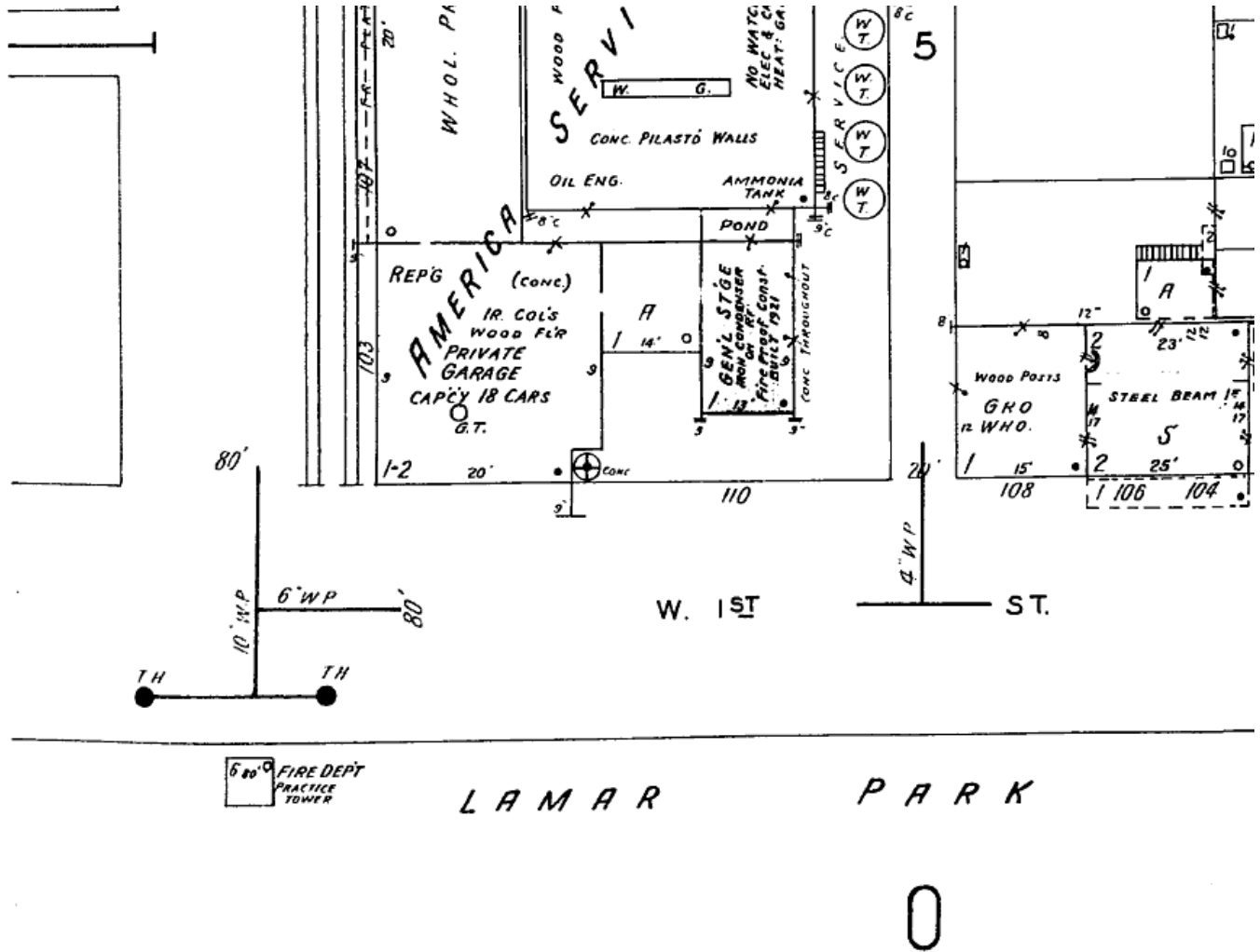
Figure 1: Parks and Boulevard System, Koch & Fowler, "A City Plan for Austin, Texas." This map shows that the land just north of the Colorado River (where the tower is located today) as "Proposed Parkway." Courtesy Austin History Center.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

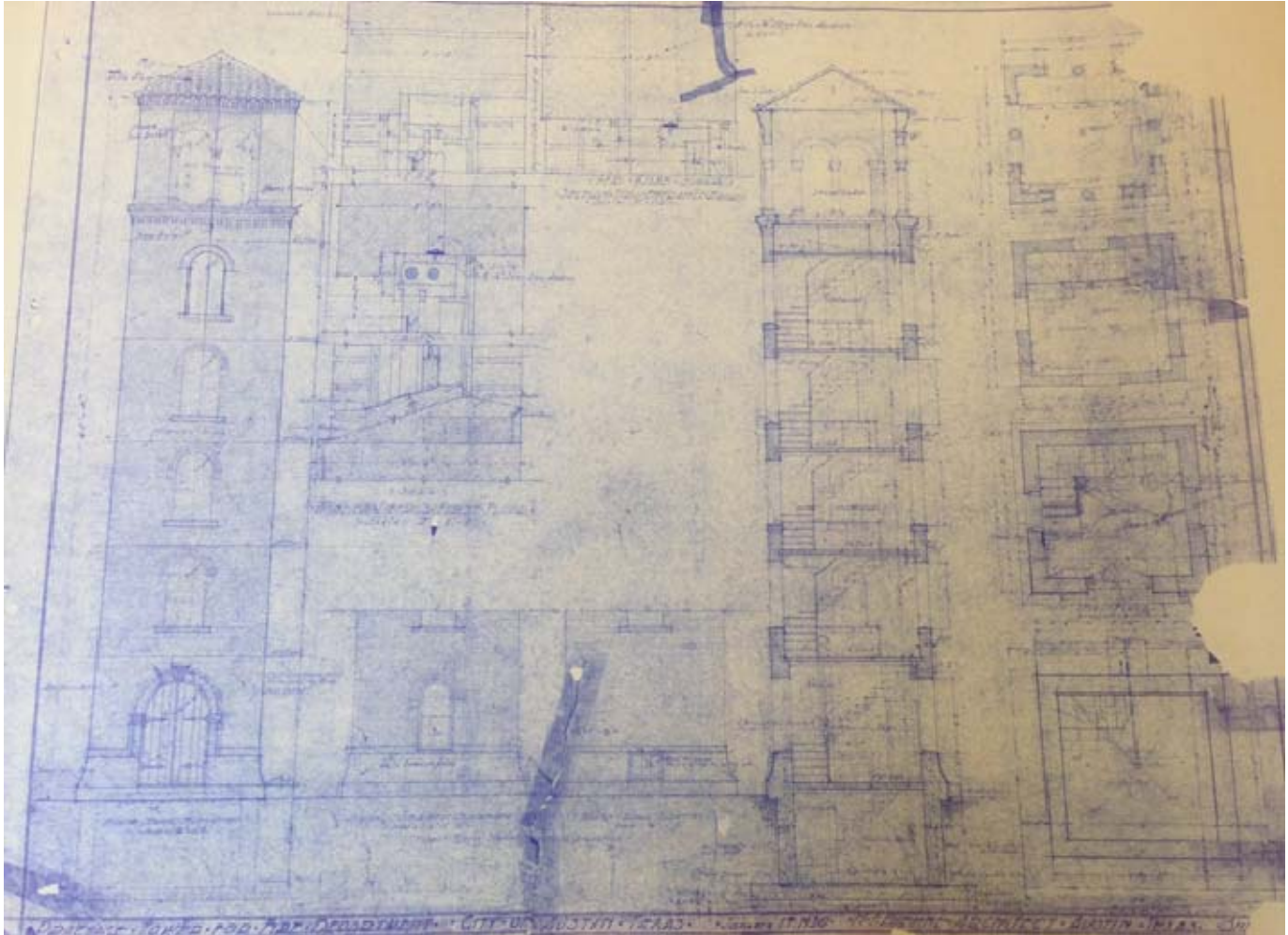
Figure 2: The nominated property (lower left) first appeared on the 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

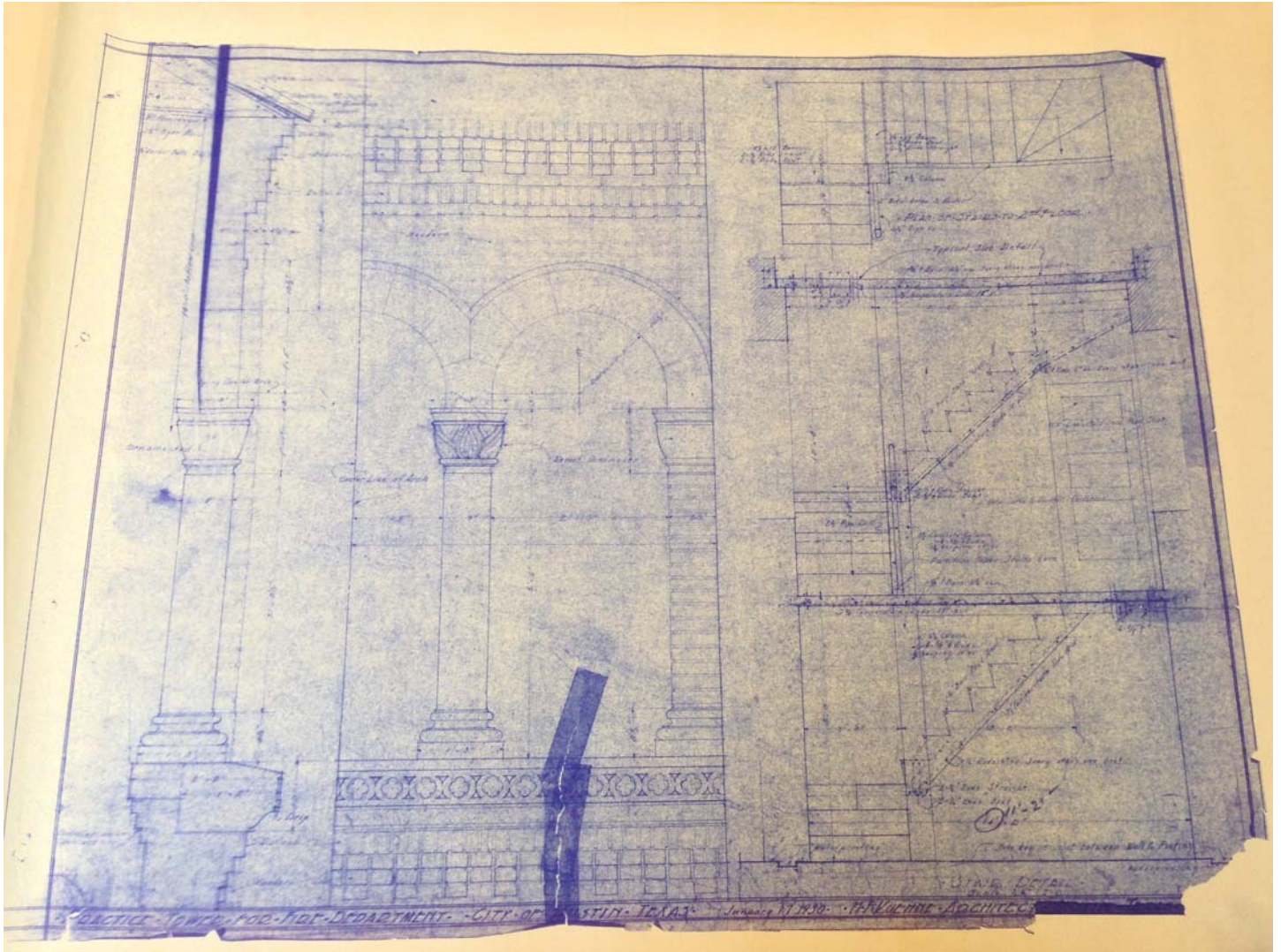
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Figure 3: Original drawings for the Practice Tower from Kuehne's office (January 17th, 1930). Courtesy Austin History Center.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 4: Original drawings for the Practice Tower from Kuehne's office (January 17th, 1930). Courtesy Austin History Center.

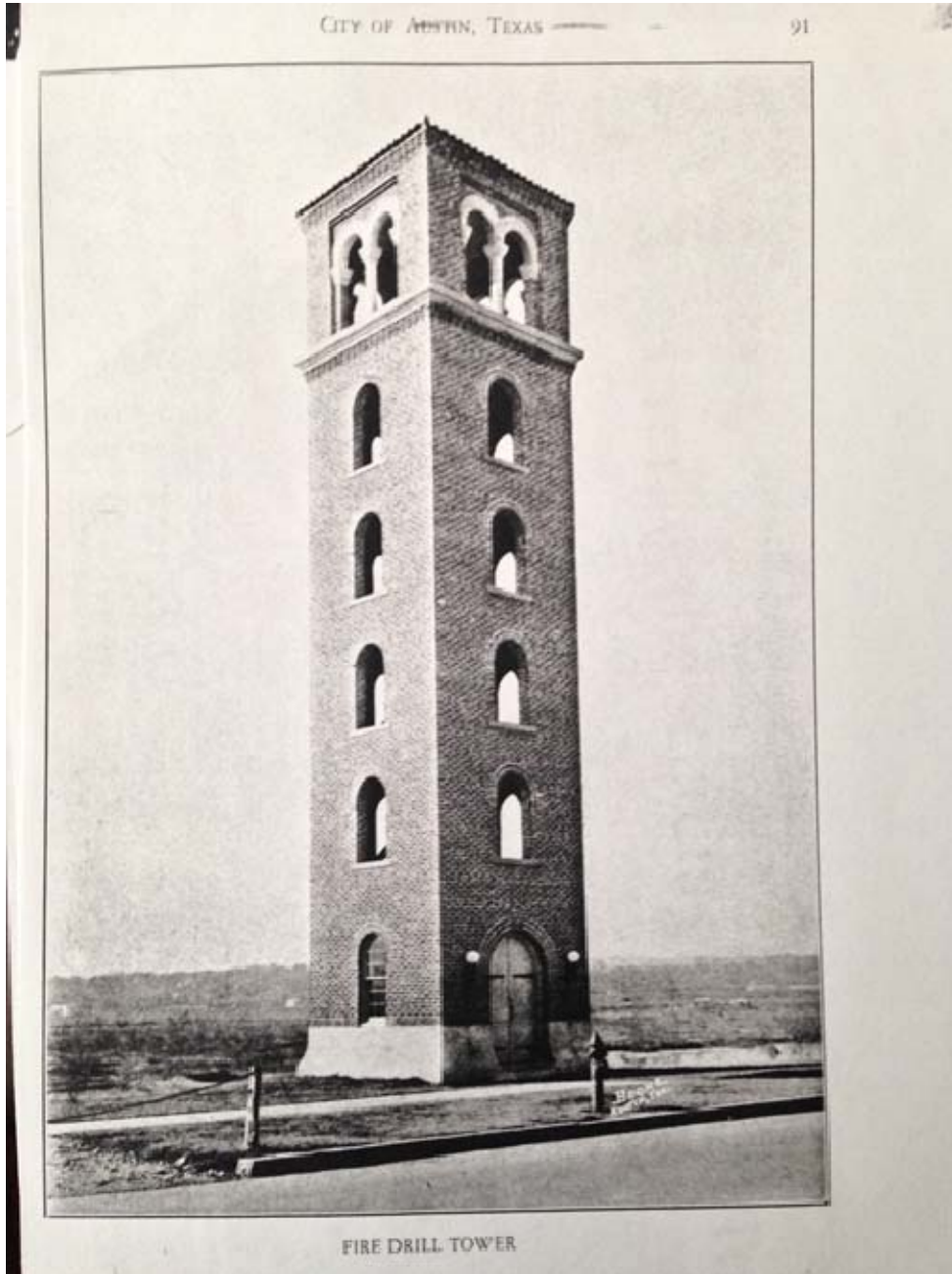




Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 5: Fire Drill Tower (1930). This is one of the earliest photographs of the tower. Courtesy Austin History Center.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 6: Aerial view of downtown Austin, looking north (late 1930's). The tower is at the bottom left of the photo, circled. Courtesy Austin History Center.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 7: The Fire Drill Tower in action (1937). Courtesy Austin Fire Museum.

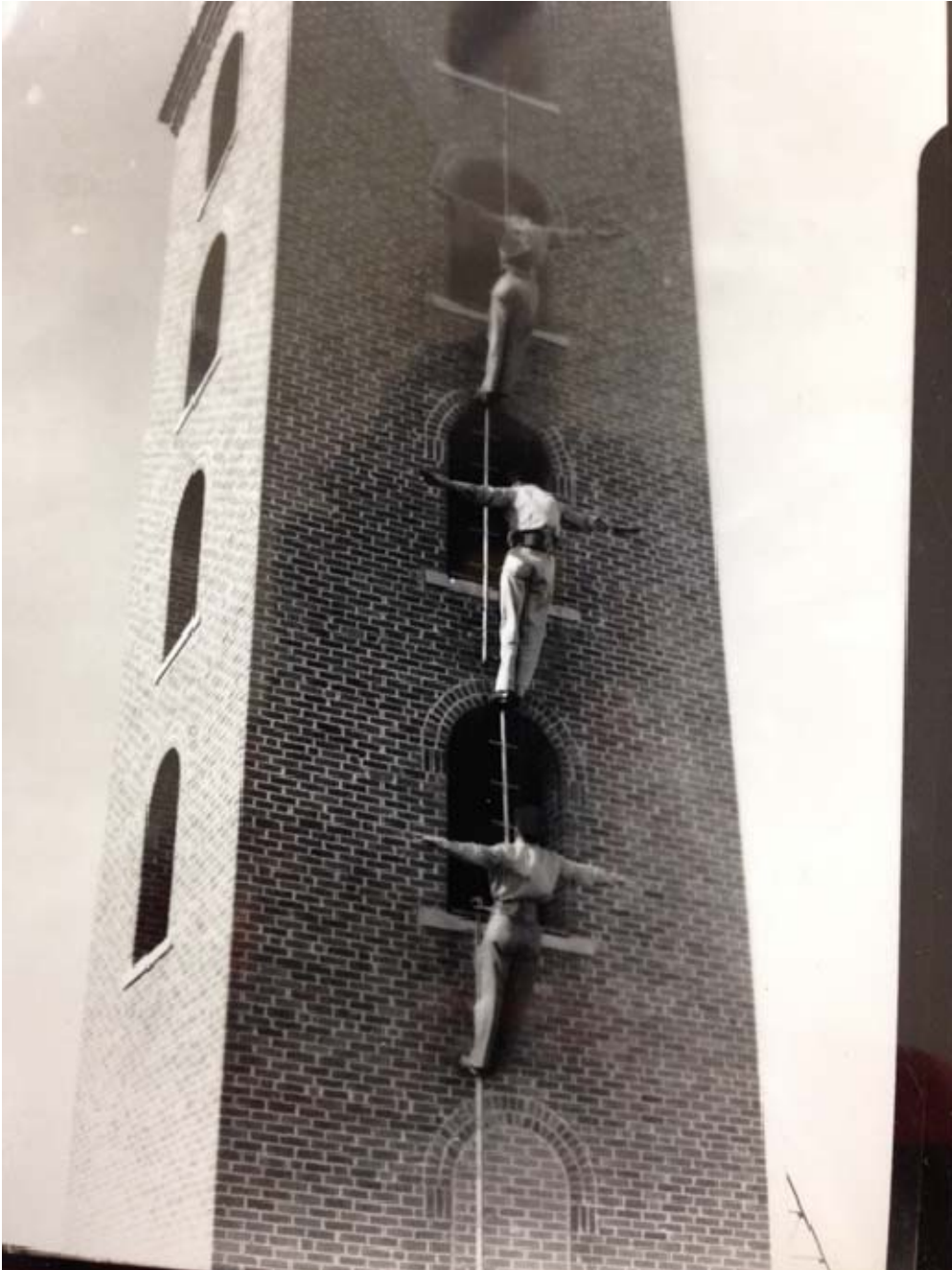




Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 8: Aerial stunts performed by firemen (undated). Courtesy Austin Fire Museum.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 9: Aerial ladder works (undated). Courtesy Austin Fire Museum.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Figure 10: Testing the Hose (1954). Courtesy Austin Fire Museum.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 11: Invitation Card for the re-dedication ceremony (August 23rd, 1978) by Women In Construction. Courtesy Austin History Center.


**CONTRIBUTORS**

<p>Mrs. Rex D. Kitchens                  Mrs. Arthur Fehr                  True Fit Boat Seats                  Dills-Challstrom, Inc.                  Debbie Chell                  Mary Frances Pinchback                  Judy Canion                  Lief Johnson Ford                  Dr. &amp; Mrs. S. H. Deviden                  Ralph Moreland Restaurants                  Peters &amp; Fields                  The Walter Tips Co.                  Young &amp; Pratt, Inc.                  Austin Fire Fighters Assoc.                  Villalva-Cohen, Architects                  P. E. R. Reinforcing, Inc.                  Mr. &amp; Mrs. W. R. King                  Mr. &amp; Mrs. Pat Canion                  V. J. Brough                  H. Crockett Properties, Inc.                  Ann Club of Austin                  Kings Assoc. of Austin                  J. B. Felps                  Sherline P. Albert                  Lawrence D. White Assoc.</p>	<p>Harley Bjornson                  Austin Sheet Metal Assoc.                  Mechanical Contractors Assoc.                  Alice Johnston                  Carole Keeton McClellan                  Centex Materials                  Ace Lumber Co.                  Safe Way Rental Equipment Co., Inc.                  Austin Roofing Contractors Assoc.                  Rich Plumbing Co.                  Maurais Brothers, Inc.                  Rex D. Kitchens Construction Co.                  Grimes-Parker Electric, Inc.                  Binswanger Glass Co.                  Heister Ornamental Iron Works                  J. Roy White                  Bradford Paint Company                  James H. Holland Jr.                  Miller Blue Print                  Mr. &amp; Mrs. Jim Overton                  Capital Acoustical                  Odie Howerly Plastering                  Austin Hardware Co.                  Alpha Painting &amp; Decorating, Inc.</p>
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**CONTRIBUTORS**

**ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS**

<p>C. Evans Construction Co., Inc.                  Equiker Construction Co.                  Texas Iron &amp; Steel Co.                  Strippling-Blake Lumber Co.                  Wells Bank &amp; Trust                  Austin Concrete Works, Inc.                  A. Gilbert Co., Inc.                  Central Equipment Co.                  K. Jennings Electric Co.                  Ann Johnston, Inc.                  Stokes-Vaibrough &amp; Searney Agency                  Austin Roofing Job                  C. A. Schutze Agency                  Texas State Bank                  Mechanical Reps, Inc.                  R. Heidrick, CIA                  Austin National Bank                  Elgin-Butler Brick Co.                  Pool &amp; Rogers Paving Co.                  Garbet Lawn Sprinkler Service                  Fox &amp; Hearn, Inc.</p>	<p>Builders Equip. Rental, Inc.                  George Warren Co.                  Mr. &amp; Mrs. E. B. Sneed                  E. M. Durbin, Inc.                  Trafton &amp; Son                  J. M. Boyer, Inc.                  E. &amp; W. Plumbing &amp; Heating                  Builders Products, Inc.                  Andy Davis, GENSCO                  Mark Electric, Inc.                  Walter E. Orr, Austin National Bank                  F. R. Miller, Austin National Bank                  Capitol Aggregates, Inc.                  Pat Canion Excavating Co.                  Alamo Steel &amp; Machine Co.                  H. Richards Oil Co.                  Commercial Drywall, Inc.                  Thomas C. Wommack, CIA                  Peter Pincoffs, CIA                  Bill Crouch Electric Co.                  Air Conditioning, Inc.</p>
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AUSTIN TEXAS CHAPTER  
 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
 OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION



Dedication of the  
**BUFORD TOWER & KITCHENS  
 MEMORIAL CHIMES**  
 August 23, 1978

Our Special Thanks to the **AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**. Through their services, all above contributions were rendered tax deductible.

Note to Contributors: some names could have been omitted due to printing deadline of program.

Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 1: North façade. Camera facing south.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 2: West façade. Camera facing east.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 3: South façade. Camera facing north.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 4: East façade. Camera facing west.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 5: The 100-year Flood Plain Marker on the west side of the tower. Camera facing east.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 6: North elevation, door grill detail. Camera facing south.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 7: Sixth floor interior and carillon. Camera facing northwest.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 8: Fourth floor interior steel staircase. Camera facing southeast.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 9: Third floor window. Camera facing northwest.





Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 10: The north face of the tower, as seen from Colorado and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets. Camera facing south, toward Lady Bird Lake.



Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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Photo 11: Detail, fifth and sixth floors.



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Austin Fire Drill Tower

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Travis

DATE RECEIVED: 8/26/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/23/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/11/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/11/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000720

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 10-11-16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

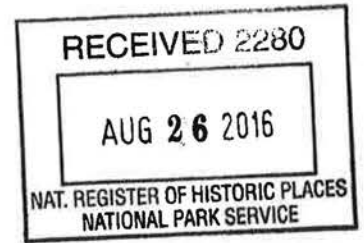
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*



TO: Edson Beall  
 National Register of Historic Places  
 National Park Service  
 1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)  
 Washington, DC 20005

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO  
 Texas Historical Commission

RE: Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas

DATE: August 22, 2016

The following materials are submitted:

X	Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Austin Fire Drill Tower, Austin, Travis County, Texas
	Resubmitted nomination.
	Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
	Multiple Property Documentation form on disk.
	Resubmitted form.
	Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
X	CD with TIFF photograph files, KMZ files, and nomination PDF
	Correspondence

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do\_\_\_) (do not\_\_\_) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

