

56-2131

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: Amarillo Building  
Other name/site number: NA  
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 301 S. Polk  
City or town: Amarillo State: Texas County: Potter  
Not for publication:  Vicinity: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 12/20/17  
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: \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

2/23/2018  
Date of Action

Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	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: NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** COMMERCE/business

**Current Functions:** COMMERCE/business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Other: Two-part Vertical Block

**Principal Exterior Materials:** brick, terracotta

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

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<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:** 1925-26

**Significant Dates:** 1925, 1926

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

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

**Architect/Builder:** Shepard & Wiser, architects; Fred Bone Construction Company, contractor

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8 through 14)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 15-16)

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested (Part 1 approved Feb. 3, 2015).
- 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
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** 0.36 acres

### Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (use decimal degree format)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 35.210451° Longitude: -101.836121°

**Verbal Boundary Description:** Block 33 Glidden and Sanborn Addition, Tract 1, Lots 17-20

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all legal parcels on which the building sits.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Hannah Curry-Shearouse and Anna Mod, Historic Preservation Specialists  
Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants  
Address: 10245 W. Little York, Suite 600  
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Date: March 2017

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheet 17)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets 18-22)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets 23-28)

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## Photographs

Amarillo Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas  
Photographed by Hannah Curry-Shearouse /Anna Mod  
October 2016 / March 2017

West façade and south elevation, view northeast  
Photograph Number 0001

North elevation, view southeast  
Photograph Number 0002

East elevation, view west  
Photograph Number 0003

South elevation, view north  
Photograph Number 0004

Detail of the S. Polk entrance, view east  
Photograph Number 0005

Detail of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue entrance, view south  
Photograph Number 0006

Detail of windows showing sills and keystones with cornice detail  
Photograph number 0007

Detail of terracotta ornament at storefronts  
Photograph number 0008

Interior, ground floor lobby from the S. Polk entrance, view east  
Photograph Number 0009

Interior, typical upper level elevator lobby, view west  
Photograph Number 00010

Interior, typical upper level crossbar hallway connecting the north and south towers  
Photograph Number 0011

**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.

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## Description

The Amarillo Building at 301 S. Polk in downtown Amarillo, Texas, is an eight-story two-part vertical block designed by the Kansas City firm Shepherd and Wiser. The building is located on the corner of Polk and SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in downtown Amarillo and has two primary facades. The H-plan building was constructed in two phases: the north tower (facing SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue) was constructed first in 1925 with an I-plan, and the crossbar and south tower (facing Polk) was added one year later in 1926. The building is concrete framed and clad in tan brick with elaborate and exuberant terracotta detailing on the window sills, parapet, and surrounding the square ground floor columns and storefronts. The original windows were replaced during a major renovation in the 1980s with dark aluminum framed fixed windows with tinted single panes on all elevations and the ground floor storefronts. Despite the window replacement, the building retains a high degree of its integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling and association.

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The Amarillo Building is an eight-story two-part vertical block skyscraper with an H plan on the southeast corner of the S. Polk and SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue intersection in Amarillo. The building's plan above the second floor is best described as an "H plan" composed of two stems and a crossbar. The building has two primary facades due to its corner location, but the building's address is Polk Street. The remainder of the block is surface parking. Other early twentieth century commercial buildings in the vicinity include the Rule Building across SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to the north, and the MAXOR building across S. Polk to the west. The Amarillo building has a concrete frame and is clad primarily with tan common bond brick with tan terracotta detailing. The roof is flat with a terracotta-capped parapet. On the roof are two gabled penthouses that house the mechanical equipment for each tower's elevators, as well as a large satellite dishes for Cumulus Radio, one of the building's largest tenants. Following the majority of early twentieth century skyscrapers, the building's exterior is arranged into three distinct sections, similar to a Classical column: base, shaft, and capitul. The two-part vertical block similarly arranges the building with the lower zone as two stories, forming the visual base, with the upper six floors commanding emphasis for the building's verticality. The two-part vertical block composition was commonly used for early twentieth century department stores, hotels, and office buildings.<sup>1</sup>

The base of the building has seven storefront bays on the west (S. Polk) façade arranged in an ABACABA pattern defined by square columns clad with terracotta. The arrangement continues, although simplified, through the shaft and cornice of the building. The north elevation along SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is similarly detailed with five large storefront openings defined by square columns clad with terracotta and a smaller opening in the first bay. When the north tower originally opened in 1925, the primary entrance was located along SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue on the north elevation. The building retains the SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue entrance, centrally located along the elevation. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue entrance is surrounded by terracotta and has two columns *in antis* with decorative brackets placed  $\frac{3}{4}$  up the shaft. The double door entrance is recessed and is the same dark metal and tinted glass as the storefronts. Low planter boxes have been inserted between the square columns on all but the central entry bay on the north and west elevations. When the south tower opened in 1926, the primary entrance was relocated to S. Polk on the west façade, where it remains today. Over the paired door entrance on S. Polk are large dark metal letters spelling AMARILLO BUILDING.

The square columns that define the bay composition of the ground floor storefront are detailed with terracotta bands of repeating compressed oval motif; these ovals are stacked horizontally. This decorative compressed oval band repeats on the sides of the columns and in the frieze above the storefronts, only oriented vertically. There is an enframed rosette at the top of each column within the frieze. Above the frieze is a terracotta cornice comprised of three bands: the lower is egg and dart, the middle has a band of fluting, and an upper band of Vitruvian scrolls or wave pattern. The frieze and cornice between the first and second floors is continuous on the north and west elevations, the two primary facades. Above the cornice, the second floor is distinctly detailed with two cast stone bands: one runs continuously

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: a guide to American commercial architecture*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000, p. 82.

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above the windows with small terracotta emblems at the keystone and upper corners of each flat arched second floor window. The second band runs at the window midpoint and is interrupted by each of the windows. Between each window, this band includes a larger cast stone or terracotta escutcheon plate for the exterior globe light fixtures.

The window openings in the shaft of the building are in eleven bays on the north and south elevations, and follow an ABBBBBBBBA pattern. On the west façade, the stems of the H are each three bays compositions with an ABA pattern. The pattern is mirrored on the east elevation, which also has the exterior fire escapes in the central “B” bays on each stem. All of the original sash windows were replaced in the 1980s with dark metal frame windows with dark tinted glass that fit into the original openings. The windows all retain their terracotta Vitruvian scroll sills and their brick soldier course lintels. Those windows that originally had paired sashes, the larger openings, have a terracotta keystone in the brick soldier course. The original windows on the north and south elevations were composed with the “A” bays using one-over-one sash windows, and the “B” bays using paired one-over-one sash windows. Those on the west and east elevations were reversed, with paired one-over-one sash windows in the “A” bays and single one-over-one sash windows in the “B” bays. The interior of the H-plan, the aperture, is a mirror image of the north and south elevations, interrupted only by the central crossbar.

The building’s cornice starts at the eighth-floor window header, includes the parapet, and is continuous on all elevations. The cornice begins with another belt course of Vitruvian scrollwork. Above is a brick frieze, regularly punctuated by terracotta scuppers above each window opening. Above the frieze, there is a brick soldier course projects slightly, topped with a belt course of pearl molding. The pearl molding is interrupted by regularly spaced thickly-framed vertical panels. The parapet is brick with cast stone coping, and it undulates slightly to take on the appearance of a crenelated battlement.

### **Building Interior**

The primary entrance off of S. Polk opens into a large vestibule with dark brown brick flooring with acoustical ceiling and a diamond-shaped skylight. The building’s interior was extensively remodeled during the 1980s, particularly in the lobby. Changes to the interior include the introduction of thin wood paneling on the lobby walls and the repaving of the lobby floor with a dark brown common brick. The brick has been treated with a clear, glossy coating for easier cleaning. An off-center corridor extends from the west entrance to a tenant-only entrance on the east elevation. There are two elevators for each tower. The north tower elevators face north towards 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, while the south tower elevators face south. There is a single skylight from the western aperture to the ground floor lobby, and the ceiling is a typical commercial suspended ceiling with lay-in panels interspersed with a drop ceiling that is perforated only for light fixtures. The lobby retains the building’s original signage in the elevator banks and lobby restrooms.

On the upper levels, the public spaces are laid out in a U-plan. These public spaces include the elevator lobbies for both the north and south towers as well as the hallway and staircases located in the crossbar of the H-plan. The elevator lobbies are located in the stems of the U-shape, while the stress for the U-plan also occupies the crossbar for the building’s overall H-plan. The crossbar space of the H-plan contains a connecting hallway, non-historic fire doors, and a set of stairs each for the north and south towers.

Other interior renovations include covering the original concrete stairs with textured vinyl and complete remodels for every bathroom in the building. Floor-mounted combination heating and cooling units were installed beneath the windows at an unknown point. Textured vinyl tiles were installed on the upper level floors in the 1980s, but were recently replaced with tile or parquet wood flooring. All ceilings in the upper levels are commercial suspended ceilings with lay-in panels which hide all electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and life safety equipment. The 1980s renovation also saw the installation of fire doors to protect the historic stairwells during an emergency evacuation. The stairs retain their original cast iron balusters and handrails. Walls are painted sheetrock.

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### Statement of Significance

The Amarillo Building, in downtown Amarillo, Texas, constructed in two phases in 1925 and 1926, was Amarillo's first skyscraper.<sup>2</sup> The commercial building was owned and financed by a number of prominent local businessmen, most notably C.T. Herring, Ross D. Rogers, and Ernest O. Thompson. Constructed at the beginning of the Panhandle's oil boom, the Amarillo Building hosted commercial offices for U.S. Civil Aeronautics Administration, and oil and gas firm Hagy, Harrington, & Marsh. Though the building is now considered a mid-rise rather than a high-rise, the building nonetheless remains as a milestone of Amarillo's architectural history and its built environment. Unlike typical office buildings of the period, the brick Amarillo Building features rich terra cotta ornament on all elevations, which sets the Amarillo Building apart from its contemporaries in the city. The Amarillo Building is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level, with a period of significance of 1925-1926.

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### Potter County and the City of Amarillo

In 1876, the Texas legislature created the 54 panhandle counties, including Potter, to provide government services to the area.<sup>3</sup> The railroad arrived in 1884 in what is now Potter County; prior to that the area was dominated by large cattle ranches. Advertisement by rail companies brought settlers and businesses to the area, some taking advantage of discounted tickets in order to counter stereotypes about the "Great American Desert."<sup>4</sup> Potter County was established in 1887, and several land speculators vied for the opportunity to have their land chosen for the county seat. Rumors that the new site would be chosen as a "cattle shipping point and railroad center." The petition for the county's organization was submitted on August 8, 1887, and claimed to have 164 eligible voters in the county. The petition was accepted, and the first Potter County election was held on Tuesday, August 30, 1887.

Amarillo was established in the newly-formed Potter County as the county seat on September 14, 1887.<sup>5</sup> Two men, J.T. Berry and Henry B. Sanborn, owned the land at the site and began selling it to the town's newcomers. Amarillo was established after the landowner, J.T. Berry, offered commercial and residential lots to every cowhand at LX Ranch, where the majority of voters worked.<sup>6</sup> Sanborn ultimately swayed the settlers to live on his parcels and even the county courthouse, once located in Berry's section, was eventually relocated to a Sanborn lot.

In addition to the rail and cattle industries, Amarillo citizen Charles Goodnight concurrently pioneered the wheat industry in the region during the 1890s. Early rail advertising had included free wheat seed in order to "seed business," and Goodnight quickly saw the opportunity for a cash crop, not just cattle feed.<sup>7</sup> The town incorporated in 1899, based on an economy of cattle ranching and shipping via the Fort Worth and Denver and the Santa Fe railroads.<sup>8</sup> The addition of the Rock Island railroad line in 1902 brought three major rail lines to the town. At this time, the local government began a significant infrastructure investment adding sewers, water, gas, electricity, and telephone lines. Indoor plumbing was taking hold in residences and commercial buildings across the town. The economic boom also resulted in new brick architecture replacing the wood frame buildings previously in place in the residential and commercial areas.<sup>9</sup> In 1908, Amarillo saw the installation of electric streetcars, and the 1910 census reports that the

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<sup>2</sup> "Construction of Eight Story Building is Pace Setter for Future Structures for City," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sunday, December 6, 1925, Section 3, Page 1.

<sup>3</sup> Della Tyler Key, *In the Cattle Country: History of Potter County 1887-1966*, Wichita Falls: Nortex Offset Pub., 1972, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Key, p. 35

<sup>5</sup> Key, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Key, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Cox, *Historic Amarillo: an Illustrated History*, San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2000, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Cox, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Cox, p. 31.



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town's population was nearly 10,000.<sup>10</sup> Amarillo was a small but prosperous town, sustained by rural-based economy until oil was discovered nearby.

In 1918, a large oil field was discovered in nearby Hutchinson County, and the oil and gas companies subsequently discovered gas fields in Potter County.<sup>11</sup> Though none were located in Amarillo city limits, its position as one of the largest towns in the panhandle made it the obvious choice for the companies establishing offices near the fields.<sup>12</sup> Charles Gould's 1918 discovery of natural gas at R.B. Masterson's ranch in northeast Potter County dramatically changed the course of the city's development. Although virtually no market for natural gas existed at the time, the experience led to the formation of the Amarillo Oil Company, which struck oil in 1921. Additional drilling soon revealed that the Panhandle boasted the world's largest natural gas field. Wildcatters discovered oil in large quantities in nearby Hutchinson County in January 1926, and within weeks, 50,000 people poured into the newly-established town of Borger, at the center of the oil field. The gas and oil discoveries were followed by the establishment of refineries and shipping facilities in Amarillo, and the expansion of the regional rail network. The new oil economy helped Amarillo to soar, bringing in federal facilities with the United States Helium Plant, the Federal Bureau of Mines, and four routes of the federal highway system.<sup>13</sup> As aviation technology took off, the city constructed a municipal airport, quickly bringing commercial aviation to the city.

Amarillo's prosperity during the 1920s drew thousands of newcomers to Amarillo, and major oil companies such as Phillips, Shamrock, and Magnolia established headquarters in the city. The construction boom is evidenced by the issue of nearly 400 building permits issued in Amarillo during the first quarter of 1926 alone.<sup>14</sup> The city's first skyscrapers were erected on Polk Street, symbolizing Amarillo's increasing importance as the center of the Panhandle oil and gas fields. More sophisticated building activity requiring the services of architects and engineers attracted many regionally renowned architects to the city. Thousands of newcomers poured into the city leading to the expansion of suburban development. Route 66, designated as a national highway in 1926, ran through the heart of Amarillo, and served as a primary route for national commerce from Chicago to Los Angeles, as well as a modern emigrant trail for those in the Midwest escaping dustbowl conditions for the promise of a new life in the west.

The stock market crash of 1929, followed by a drop in agricultural prices in 1930, immediately slowed Amarillo's building boom. Although gas and oil revenues kept the local economy from collapsing altogether, repeated agricultural failures in the region and the effects of the national Depression curtailed Amarillo's expansion. During the Great Depression, Amarillo suffered immensely from the effects of the Dust Bowl. However, the Work Projects Administration established a regional office in the city, bringing valuable federal relief and funding for infrastructure improvements. In addition, a veterans' hospital was constructed and a military airfield was commissioned as the United States entered World War II.<sup>15</sup> The war revived agricultural production in Potter County, and commission of the Amarillo Army Air Field and the Pantex Ordnance Plant also provided economic opportunity during the war. The Pantex Plant was decommissioned immediately following the end of the war, but reopened in 1951 to assemble nuclear warheads.<sup>16</sup> It remains the largest employer in the county although its work is largely disarmament since the last nuclear weapon was assembled in 1991.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cox, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> "Amarillo History Timeline," City of Amarillo, accessed 4 March 2016 <[http://amarillo.gov/?page\\_id=1715](http://amarillo.gov/?page_id=1715)>

<sup>12</sup> Cox, p. 39-40.

<sup>13</sup> "Amarillo History Timeline," np.

<sup>14</sup> *Amarillo Daily News*, July 18, 1926.

<sup>15</sup> "Amarillo" TheRoute-66.com, accessed 4 March 2016 <<http://www.theroute-66.com/amarillo.html>>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "About Pantex," Pantex, Consolidated Nuclear Security, LLC, accessed 27 Dec 2016.

<http://www.pantex.com/about/Pages/default.aspx>

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After the military airfield was decommissioned in 1968, Amarillo became increasingly reliant on oil and agriculture, two industries known for their boom and bust cycles. The city has seen modest population growth over the last 40 years as its residents face fluctuating oil prices, droughts, and the occasional tornado. Amarillo's population was just over 173,500 after the 2000 census.<sup>18</sup>

### Skyscrapers in Texas

Skyscrapers in the United States first emerged near the end of the nineteenth century as the confluence of cheaper steel, rising downtown property values, and elevators created an environment in which architects were encouraged to design tall buildings.<sup>19</sup> Appearing first in Chicago and New York City, skyscrapers quickly found their way to Texas' downtowns, starting with Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio.<sup>20</sup> However, as the oil industry boomed in Texas starting with Spindletop (in east Texas, near Beaumont) in 1901 and spread rapidly during the early twentieth century, Texas saw the construction of office towers throughout its economic centers as oil and gas companies began to establish regional offices.<sup>21</sup> The rapid accumulation of wealth that grew from Texas' oil economy created fertile ground for the construction of architectural monuments. The available wealth and the desire to prove themselves as "real cities" quickly saw the upward constructions as symbols of wealth and prosperity in Texas' urban areas.<sup>22</sup> Where more populated and constrained cities necessitated upward growth to earn a return on investment from new construction, Texas cities deliberately chose to construct skyscrapers to demonstrate civic pride, corporate power, and economic prosperity.<sup>23</sup>

Architectural design of skyscraper office buildings typically accommodates retail on the ground floor with offices only on the upper levels, each function requiring different levels of natural lighting. Office building skyscrapers, with their mix of retail and offices, typically used large, unbroken areas at street level and mezzanines, with offices starting at the second floor.<sup>24</sup> Early skyscraper buildings in Texas followed the Chicago style of design, which allowed for natural light wells and windows to bring light into the offices themselves.<sup>25</sup> Texas also proudly boasts the nation's first fully air-conditioned skyscraper, which opened in San Antonio in 1928 (Milam Building, NRHP #15000246).<sup>26</sup> The state was transformed by skyscraper technology and the construction of high-rise buildings, allowing for architects as Alfred C. Finn, C.D. Hill, and the firm Sanguinet and Staats to grow in prominence. Sanguinet and Staats, in particular, is known for their skyscraper designs and in their firm's portfolio includes buildings that were at one point the tallest buildings in Beaumont, Fort Worth, Houston, Midland, and San Antonio.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, H. Allen Anderson, "Amarillo, TX," accessed March 04, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hda02>. Uploaded on June 9, 2010..

<sup>19</sup> Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: a history*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001, p. 268.

<sup>20</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Willard B. Robinson, "Architecture," accessed October 19, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/cmask>. Uploaded on June 9, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Jamie Louise Lofgren, "Early Texas Skyscrapers: a history of skyscraper style, 1911-1931," master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993, p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Roth, p. 281.

<sup>26</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Willis R. Woolrich, "Air-Conditioning," accessed October 19, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/cmarp>. Uploaded on June 9, 2010..

<sup>27</sup> "Sanguinet and Staats (firm)," AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, American Institute of Architects. Accessed 21 Oct 2016 <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd4006039.aspx>

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A competitive spirit between Texas cities, absent regulations, and urban wealth contributed to Texas' growing height, and soon "every town of any size had its 'skyscraper.'"<sup>28</sup> As urban centers continued to grow and the economic centers of America continued to shift from rural agriculture-bases to manufacturing, office buildings became more popular with tenants in a myriad of professions, not just oil and gas. These tenants ranged from doctors, lawyers, and architects to accountants, salesmen, and retail. The commercial office building also allowed for a greater densification of urban cores, and it represents a new architectural type.

### The Amarillo Building

The Amarillo Building was constructed in two phases, with the north tower finished in 1925 and the crossbar and south tower for the H-plan building finished in 1926.<sup>29</sup> The building was reported as a "fireproof structure that was built in accord with the Chicago and New York code."<sup>30</sup> The north tower construction cost \$359,000,<sup>31</sup> and the contractor for the project was local company Fred Bone Construction Company.<sup>32</sup> The building's grand opening was formally celebrated with a New Year's Eve party on December 31, 1925. Building tenants flung open their offices to visitors, some even providing punch and cigars to guests during the party-turned-open-house.<sup>33</sup> Reports on the grand opening celebrations also mention descriptions of the original interior. Upon opening, the Amarillo Building was tiled with four-foot marble wainscoting and contained two Otis-brand elevators in the then-only tower. Doors to the individual offices were mahogany with full glass panels; floors were painted enameled concrete, while ceilings were plastered. Building amenities also included 24-hour elevator service, thrice daily mail pick up, steam heat, ice water fountains, hot and cold running water, and restrooms on every floor; ladies restrooms were originally located on the stair landing between floors.<sup>34</sup>

The Amarillo Building Company, which financed and owned the construction of its namesake building, was led by some of the most influential men of 1920s Amarillo. The owners and financiers of the operation included Ross D. Rogers, G.C. Saunders, Dr. B.M. Puckett, C.T. Herring, and Ernest O. Thompson.<sup>35</sup> Ross D. Rogers was mayor from 1932 until 1941. C. T. Herring was a significant rancher and business owner in Amarillo, as well as owner of the Herring Hotel, Amarillo's only surviving 1920s hotel; Herring also warranted a mention in the 1914 *Herringshaw's American Blue Book of Biography*.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Puckett worked as a physician and president of several local hospitals.<sup>37</sup>

Ernest O. Thompson served as a significant figure in the state and nationally. Thompson was mayor 1929-1932, owner of the Amarillo Hotel, and manager at the Herring Hotel during the 1930s and 40s until his death in 1966. Thompson was additionally a member of the Texas Railroad Commission, where he served as chair for several terms. Furthermore, Thompson founded the Interstate Oil Compact Commission under President Franklin Roosevelt. His

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<sup>28</sup> Lofgren, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Hall Page & Associates, Inc., *Amarillo Historic Building Survey & Preservation Program Recommendations*, Amarillo, Texas: Whitney Russell Printers, 1981, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> "Architects who designed new 8-story office building enjoy reputation throughout west," *Amarillo Daily News*, December 6, 1925, Section 3, page 1.

<sup>31</sup> "Construction of Eight Story Building is Pace Setter for Future Structures for City," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sunday, December 6, 1925, Section 3, Page 1.

<sup>32</sup> "New Building Erection to be Rushed," *The Amarillo Globe*, January 4, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Amarillo Building formally opened in brilliant party," *The Amarillo Globe*, January 1, 1926, page unknown.

<sup>34</sup> "Construction of Eight Story Building is Pace Setter for Future Structures for City," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sunday, December 6, 1925, Section 3, Page 1.

<sup>35</sup> "Amarillo Building to celebrate 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on New Year's Eve," *Amarillo Globe-News*, 23 Dec 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Herringshaw, Thomas William, *Herringshaw's American Blue Book of Biography*, Unknown Publisher, 1914.

<sup>37</sup> "Dr. B.M. Puckett Claimed by Death," *Amarillo Globe-News*, 19 Nov 1957, accessed 19 Oct 2016  
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=20007885>

## Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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national leadership in the field of oil and gas gave him the opportunity to represent the United States at the 1937 World Petroleum Congress in Paris, and he won in 1951 the gold medal for distinguished achievement from the American Petroleum Institute.<sup>38</sup>

The building opened as a commercial office tower for local businesses, and has remained an occupied commercial office tower since its opening to present.<sup>39</sup> Tenants have included retail, salons, lawyers, oil & gas companies, real estate companies, physicians, and state agencies. Notable tenants include the Boy Scouts of America, Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, Texas Attorney General's regional office, Gulf Oil Corporation, Shamrock Oil & Gas, United States Civil Aeronautics Administration, Haliburton, and oil and gas firm Hagy, Harrington & Marsh. Hagy, Harrington, and Marsh was founded by Don Harrington and Lawrence Hagy in 1927, and Stanley Marsh, Jr. was added as a partner in 1928. The firm worked to lease oil and gas rights on land in the Panhandle, and they soon became an "unmatched team."<sup>40</sup> The company's 1933 natural gasoline plant, named Cargay, became a leading producer of natural gas during World War II.<sup>41</sup>

The Amarillo Building was the city's first skyscraper, towering over the other buildings at eight stories tall.<sup>42</sup> The building became a symbol of the city's prosperity through the 1920s oil boom. There are several other buildings in Amarillo's downtown area that are now taller than the Amarillo Building, including the Herring Hotel (1926), the Barfield Building (1927), the Fisk Medical Arts Building (1928), and the Santa Fe Building (1930). However, the building represents an important milestone in Amarillo's architectural history as the city began to construct taller buildings to reflect their growth as a city and the diversification of their economy from ranching to oil and gas.

### Shepard and Wiser, Architects

Shepard and Wiser architects, also called Shepard, Farrar, and & Wiser, was a prominent architecture firm based out of Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>43</sup> Charles E. Shepard was born in 1868 in Iowa, and he received his degree from the University of Iowa. He moved to Kansas City in 1887, where he established his first firm with Martin Vrydagh.<sup>44</sup> Their partnership dissolved in 1893 when Vrydagh moved to Pittsburgh, but Shepard continued his firm as Shepard and Farrar with Ernest H. Farrar in 1895. Shepard and Farrar's partnership lasted until 1910 when Farrar retired. At this time, firm architect Albert Wiser was elevated to partner, and the firm was then renamed Shepard, Farrar & Wiser until 1918, and then renamed again in 1919 to Shepard and Wiser.<sup>45</sup> Wiser earned degrees from both the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University,<sup>46</sup> and he had worked for the firm as an apprentice and draftsman starting in

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<sup>38</sup> "General Ernest O. Thompson Historical Marker," Texas Historical Commission, Marker Number 2128, Erected 1966.

<sup>39</sup> BizStream, "Amarillo Building to celebrate 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on New Year's Eve," *Amarillo Globe-News*, 23 Dec 2015, accessed 19 Oct 2016 <http://amarillo.com/blog-post/bizstream/2015-12-23/amarillo-building-celebrate-90th-birthday-new-year%E2%80%99s-eve>

<sup>40</sup> Shanna Foust-Peebles. "Don Harrington." *Amarillo Globe-News*, May 19, 2000, accessed 19 Oct 2016 [http://amarillo.com/stories/051900/his\\_harringtond.shtml#.WAe\\_XPkrLIU](http://amarillo.com/stories/051900/his_harringtond.shtml#.WAe_XPkrLIU)

<sup>41</sup> H. Allen Anderson, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Marsh, Stanley," accessed December 27, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmacw>. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>42</sup> "Construction of Eight Story Building is Pace Setter for Future Structures for City," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sunday, December 6, 1925, Section 3, Page 1.

<sup>43</sup> Patricia Brown Glenn, Historic Kansas City Foundation, "Sophian Plaza National Register of Historic Places Nomination," October 1982.

<sup>44</sup> Sherry Piland, "Early Kansas City Architect: Charles E. Shepard," *Historic Kansas City News*, Dec.-Jan. 1980-1981, 5: 3, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> "Construction of Eight Story Building is Pace Setter for Future Structures for City," *Amarillo Daily News*, Sunday, December 6, 1925, Section 3, Page 1.

## Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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1902, working his way up the ranks until he became partner. As partner, Wisner focused on bringing in new clients while Shepard worked as the principal designer for the firm.<sup>47</sup> As Shepard and Wisner, the firm opened offices in Tulsa, Wichita, and Amarillo, in addition to their Kansas City office. Wisner lead the office in Amarillo.<sup>48</sup> Wisner left the firm in 1927, and after which Shepard partnered with Frederick C. Pickett. The firm Shepard & Pickett lasted until 1931, when Shepard's failing health and the Great Depression forced the firm to close. Shepard died in 1932.<sup>49</sup>

Shepard's work included primarily high end residential design.<sup>50</sup> Shepard and Wisner in particular is noted for their work in Amarillo on First Presbyterian Church (NRHP #91001649, 1991), the Herring Hotel, and the Amarillo Building. In Kansas City, Shepard's firms designed over 600 residences within the Hyde Park, Mission Hills, and Country Club District neighborhoods.<sup>51</sup> Shepard's firms also constructed manufacturing buildings, multi-family housing, religious buildings, and commercial centers.<sup>52</sup>

### Summary

The Amarillo Building was the efforts of several of the city's most prominent businessmen, and the result was the city's first skyscraper. The building serves as a touchstone of the city's 1920s oil and gas boom and of Amarillo's position as the economic center of the Texas Panhandle region. Both historically and currently (2017) functioning as a commercial office building, the Amarillo Building continues to serve its historic function. The building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level with a period of significance from 1925-1926. The building received a preliminary determination of historic significance under Part 1 of the National Park Service's historic preservation tax credit program in February 2015.

The architectural design for the Amarillo Building is simple and typical of commercial office buildings in the early twentieth century. The H-plan allowed the building to maximize the available rental space while still utilizing natural light and ventilation. The design followed early skyscraper layouts, however, where many early Texas skyscrapers were designed in the Gothic style, the Amarillo Building is decorated with rich terra cotta that references - in part - classical revival ornament.<sup>53</sup> While typical early skyscrapers did not use ornament on secondary exterior walls, the Amarillo Building features ornament on all elevations, notably on each window sill and along the continuous entablature that wraps around all sides.<sup>54</sup> The additional details on the building, particularly on all of the windows, sets the Amarillo Building apart from its contemporaries because most buildings in Amarillo, including the Fisk Medical Arts Building and the Herring Hotel, do not include additional detailing around the windows. Ornament on those buildings remains at the storefront and near the roofline, not along the building's shaft.

The Amarillo Building retains integrity of design, workmanship, location, feeling, and association, with somewhat diminished integrity of materials and setting. While the new windows fill the existing openings so as not to change or interrupt the building's design, the insertion of metal windows saw a loss of original material. Additionally, changes to Amarillo's built environment, such as suburbanization and its effect on the urban core, have affected the building's

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<sup>47</sup> Piland, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> "Architects who designed new 8-story office building enjoy reputation throughout the west," *Amarillo Daily News*, December 6, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Piland, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Kansas City Historic Preservation Office, "A Study to Determine the National Register Eligibility of Properties in the Country Side Neighborhood East Kansas City, Missouri," City Planning and Development Department, September 2009, accessed 9 March 2016 <<http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/JAAS049-R.pdf>>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Piland, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Henry, p. 136.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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setting. No longer surrounded by other buildings, the Amarillo Building now stands as the only building on its block. However, the architectural design for the building remains clear, with all of its ornament in place and able to convey the original appearance. Furthermore, the high-quality workmanship used on this building is evidenced through the enduring materials and legibility of the details on the building's exterior. The continuation of architectural ornament onto secondary elevations also speaks to the high quality of design and workmanship.

The Amarillo Building marks an important milestone in Amarillo's built environment, signifying the city's introduction to the oil industry and the resulting economic boom. The Amarillo Building heralded the new rise of the city's architecture as several other taller buildings were constructed within just a few years. In 2016, Amarillo's downtown skyline remains comprised of mostly three–four story buildings with a few mid-rise and high-rise buildings sprinkled through the downtown area, and the Amarillo Building remains a visible marker on the city's skyline.

Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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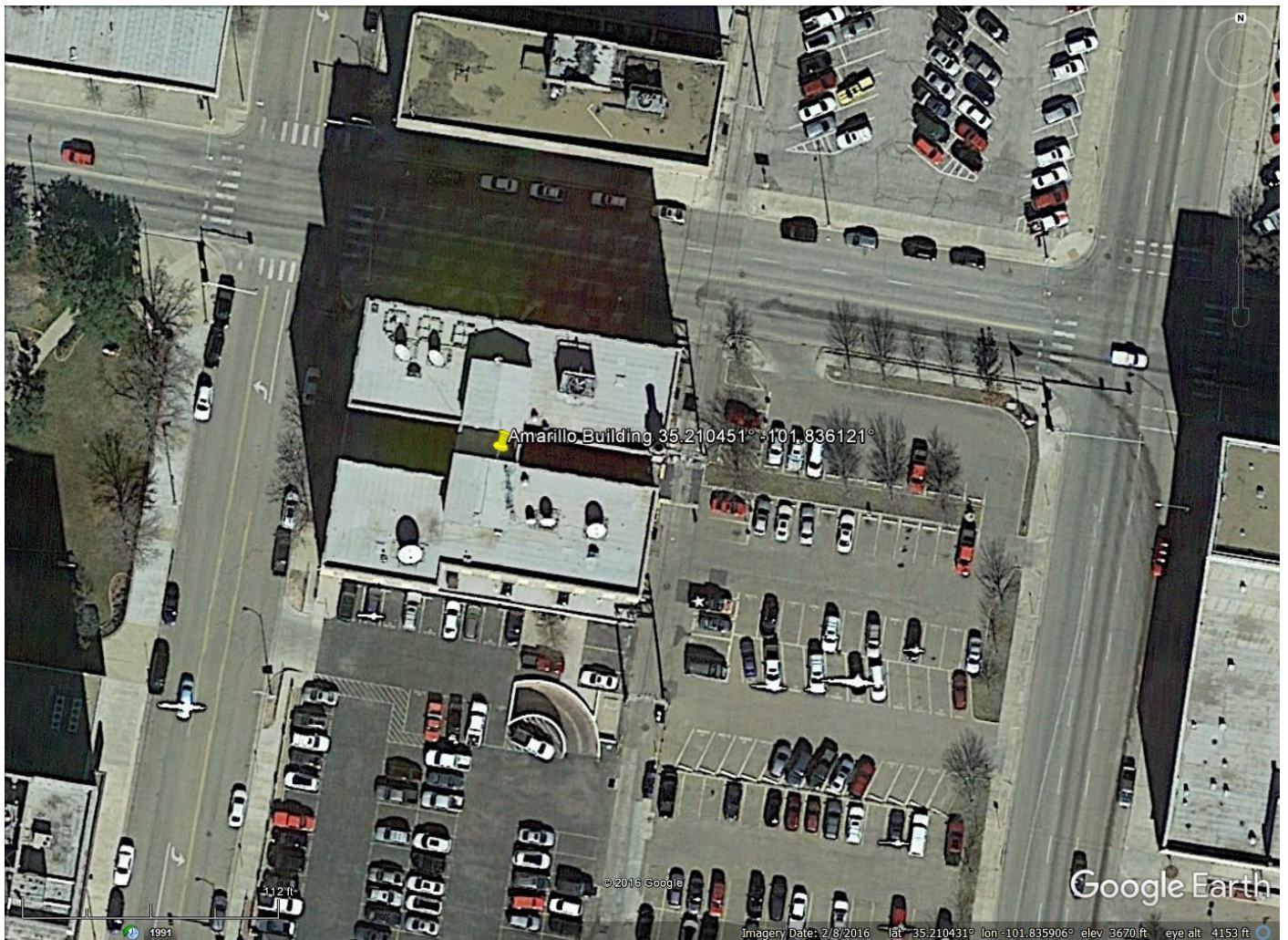


Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Potter County, Texas



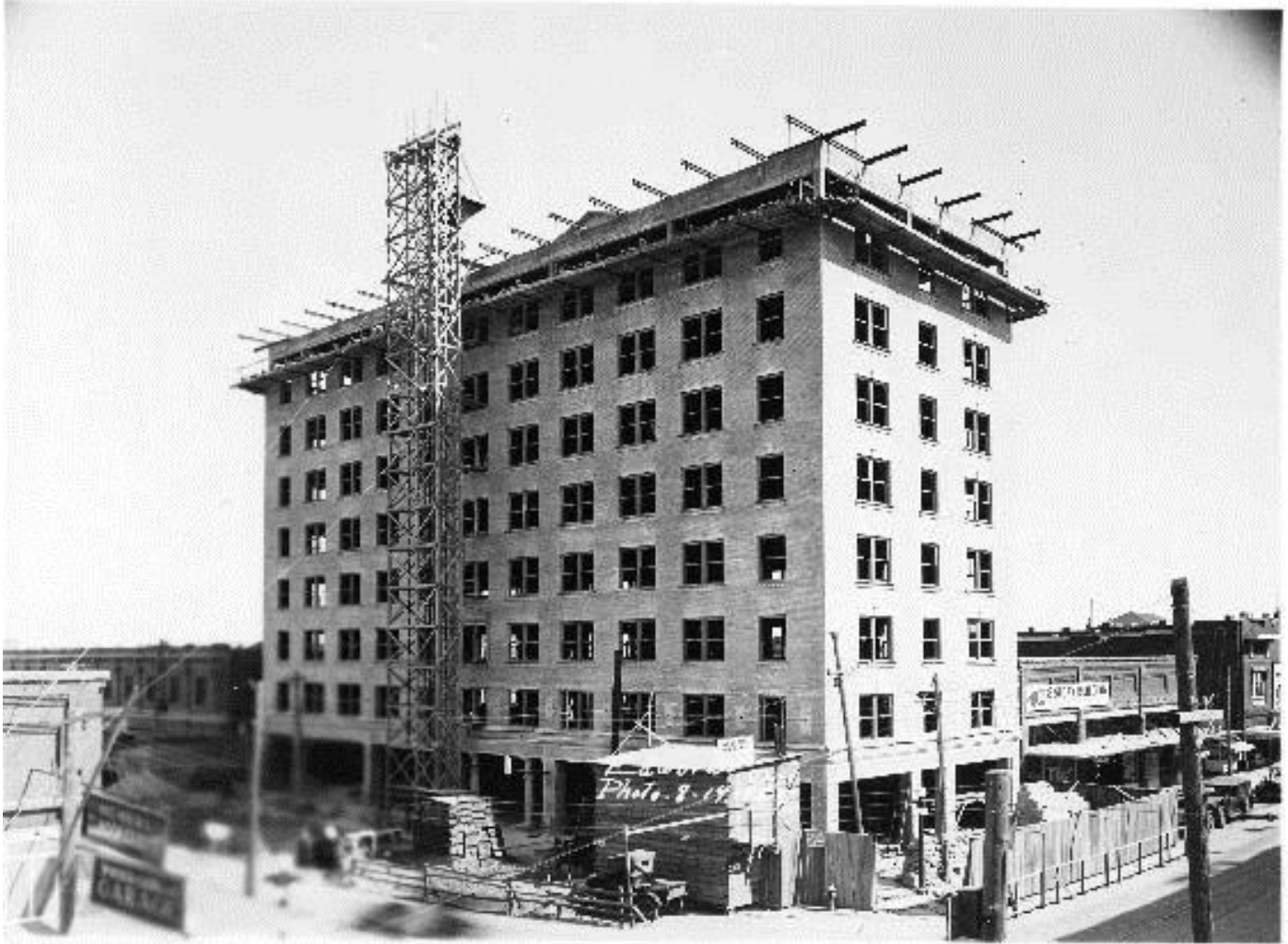
Location Map Source: Google Earth, accessed February 10, 2017



Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Figure 1 – Amarillo Building under construction, 1925. Courtesy Panhandle Plains Historical Museum





Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

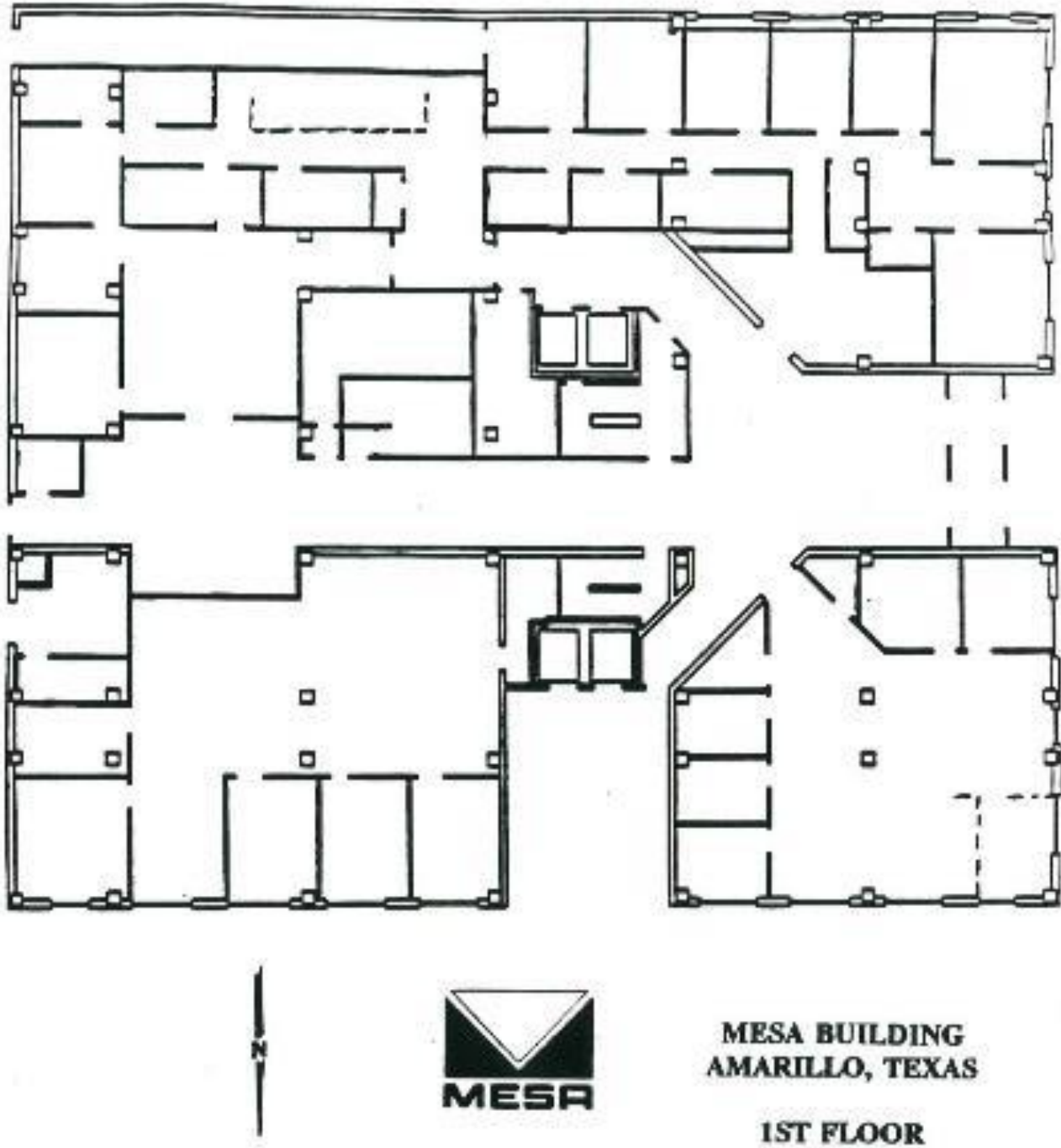
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Figure 2 – Postcard of the Amarillo Building, c. 1926. Courtesy Amarillo Public Library.



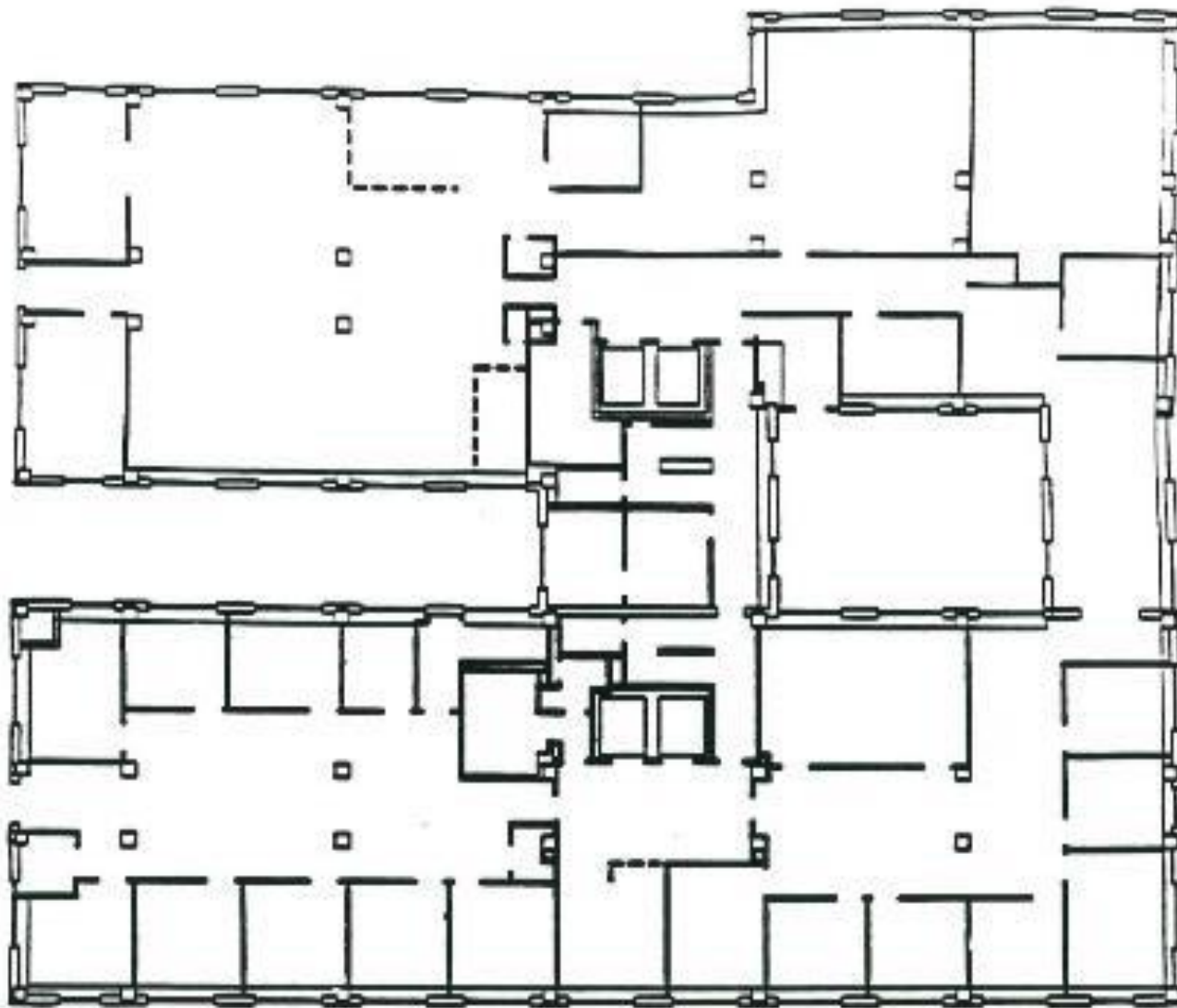
Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Figure 3 – First floor plan, c. 1980



Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Figure 4 – Second floor plan, c. 1980

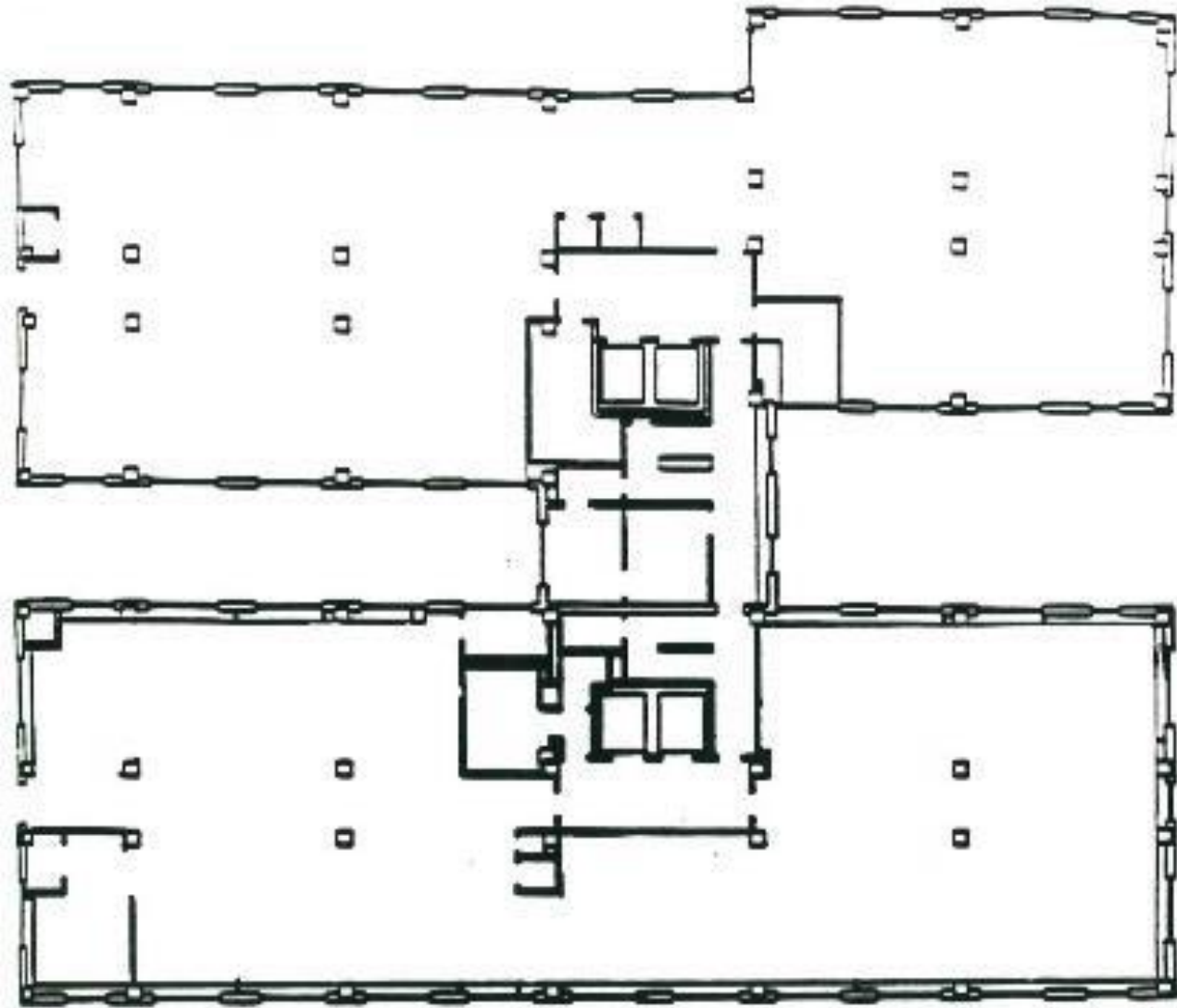


**MESA BUILDING  
AMARILLO, TEXAS**

**2ND FLOOR**

Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Figure 5 – 8<sup>th</sup> floor plan, typical of upper levels, c. 1980



**MESA BUILDING  
AMARILLO, TEXAS**

**8TH FLOOR**



Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Photo 0001 - West façade and south elevation, view northeast.



Photo 0002 - North elevation, view southeast.



Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Photo 0003 - East elevation, view west.



Photo 0004 - South elevation, view north.





Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Photo 0005 – Detail of S. Polk entrance, view east.



Photo 0006 – Detail of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue entrance, view south



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Photo 0007 – Detail of windows showing sills and keystones with cornice detail.



Photo 0008 – Detail of terracotta ornament at storefronts.





Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Photo 0009 - Interior, ground floor lobby from S. Polk entrance, view east.



Photo 0010 - Interior, typical upper level elevator lobby, view west.



Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Photo 0011 - Interior, typical upper level crossbar hallway connecting the north and south towers.



*-fin-*















AMARILLO BUILDING

301 S. POLK









ELEVATORS  
NORTH / SOUTH

North Elevators

South Elevators









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Amarillo Building

Multiple Name:

State & County: TEXAS, Potter

Date Received: 1/9/2018      Date of Pending List: 1/29/2018      Date of 16th Day: 2/13/2018      Date of 45th Day: 2/23/2018      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100002131

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      2/23/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Amarillo Building is locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Designed by the Kansas City firm of Shepard and Wisner, the eight-story, concrete and tan-brick clad building is a fine local example of early twentieth century, high-rise commercial design. The City of Amarillo's first substantial skyscraper (1925-26), the building features rich, classically-inspired terra cotta detailing that enlivens the otherwise plain facades.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept National Register Criterion C.

Reviewer Paul Lusignan      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229      Date 2/23/2018

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

*real places telling real stories*

JAN - 4 2018

TO: Edson Beall  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

DATE: December 20, 2017

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 of the <i>Amarillo Building, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas</i>
	Resubmitted nomination.
X	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:

