National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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

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other names/site	e number					
2. Location						
street & number	r248-250 E		Street		n/a	☐ not for publication
city or town	Lexington				n/a	□ vicinity
tateKen	tucky	codeKY				zip code40507
. State/Federa	al Agency Certific	ation				
State State of Fede	e Historic Pre eral agency and burea	servation (Office,	et for additional comme ad 6-4-96 Date Kentucky Herit	age Council	heet for additional
Signature of c	commenting official/Titl	e		Date		
	commenting official/Titleral			Date		
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State or Fede National Par hereby certify that entered in t See determined National f determined National f	rk Service Certifice the property is: the National Register. e continuation sheet. eligible for the Register e continuation sheet. not eligible for the	u	\$ 3.	•	rse	Date of Action 7/3//.

Fayette Co., Kentucky County and State

5. Classification			خيت ينجن	takin je na jag
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Numbe (Do not	er of Resources within Property include previously listed resources in the	count.)
☑ private ☐ public-local ☐ public-State ☐ public-Federal	□ building(s) □ district □ site □ structure □ object	Contrik	outing Noncontributing	buildings sites
				structures
. ,			* **	objects Total
Name of related multiple pro (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of N/A	pperty listing fa multiple property listing.)		er of contributing resources prev National Register	
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current F (Enter cated	Functions pories from instructions)	
COMMERCE/department	store	WORK	IN PROGRESS	
		COMME	RCE/business	
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7. Description				
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categ	ories from instructions)	
		foundation	COLLABORRE	
MODERN MOVEMENT/Int	ternational Style	walls	BRICK	
			LIMESTONE	
		roof	ASPHALT	
		other	GRANITE	
			CTAINIECS CTEEL	

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

Record #

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County								2 1		

8. Statement of Significance Applicable National Register Criteria Areas of Significance (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property (Enter categories from instructions) for National Register listing.) ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made ARCHITECTURE a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. 5 d 4 3 d 5 ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. **X** C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and Period of Significance distinguishable entity whose components lack 1949~~~ individual distinction. □ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. Criteria Considerations Significant Dates (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.) 1949 Property is: ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) ☐ B removed from its original location. n/a ☐ C a birthplace or grave. **Cultural Affiliation** ☐ **D** a cemetery. n/a ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure. ☐ F a commemorative property. Architect/Builder ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years. AMOS PARRISH & CO., NEW YORK, architct FRANKEL & CURTIS, LEXINGTON, architect Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) 9. Major Bibliographical References Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data: preliminary determination of individual listing (36 ☐ State Historic Preservation Office CFR 67) has been requested ☐ Other State agency previously listed in the National Register □ Federal agency previously determined eligible by the National ■ Local government Register ☐ University designated a National Historic Landmark □ Other ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey Name of repository: LFUCG Division of Historic Preserv recorded by Historic American Engineering

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)			•
Property Owner			
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)			
James N. Gray Construction Company			
street & number 250 West Main Street #2500	telephone_	(606) 281-5000	
city or townLexington	KY	40507 zip code	

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wolf Wile Department Store Building
Fayette County, KY

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The Wolf Wile Department Store Building is a four story commercial structure at the corner of East Main Street and Quality Street on the east end of the Lexington, Kentucky downtown business core. Since its construction in 1949-1950, until the closing of the business in 1992, this structure served as the business location for the Wolf Wile Department Store. The Wolf Wile Department Store Building is designed in the International Style with modifications by both the designers and the owners to make the building more contextural with the surrounding and adjacent commercial structures on the east end of Lexington's central business district. The exterior of the building remains unchanged except for the removal of a hanging sign over the entrance on the Main Street facade. The interior of the building remains intact on the basement, main, second and fourth floors. Alterations made on the third floor were completed in 1958 as an overhaul in the home decorating department. All in all, the building remains as it was designed by New York retail designers Amos Parrish & Co. in collaboration with the Lexington architectural firm Frankel and Curtis.

The building has a nearly rectangular open plan. Overall dimensions of the building are 80'-3"x 211'-0". The building is constructed of reinforced concrete on a steel frame with brick, limestone and granite sheathing in a rectilinear composition on the north and east facades. The building has a flat built-up roof with parapets at the fourth level; elevator and mechanical penthouses rise above this level. The roof contains a free standing metal frame "Wolf Wile" sign facing west. This sign was recycled from use from the prior location of this department store business.

North (Main Street) Facade

On the north (Main Street) facade, the building incorporates an undercut first story display window/entrance system with three pairs of double herculite doors and twelve full height and specialty display windows with surrounds and sashes of stainless steel. Three sets of double leaf doors of thick plate glass with lucite and metal handles span both the north and south elevations of the vestibule. This entrance sequence departs dramatically from other buildings along Main Street and borrows more heavily from suburban store models from the 1940s. A flat canopy, supported by three tapered stainless steel columns, covers the undercut storefront area. Beneath this canopy is Flemish bond pattern brick with tan mortar. A 4" wide highly polished granite band, grey beneath the storefront windows and reddish brown beneath the brick walls, marks the intersection of front facade and the six foot wide flagstone pavement which is laid the entire width of the front facade. The underside of the canopy roof is clad in metal square tiles. A polished aluminum sign is executed in free-standing letters and rests above the canopy roof.

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Above the canopy, the second and third stories of the facade are covered in polished light grey granite in a 4'x4' pre-cut dimension. The fourth story is recessed and not visible from street level. The fourth story is constructed of brick topped with a stone coping. A return pylon is located on the extreme northwest corner of the front facade of the building, and rises 88' from street level to above the fourth story. It is clad in thin random-coursed limestone and contains an additional vertical sign -- "Wolf Wile" -- on its west face.

East Facade

The east facade (Quality Street facade) of the building is faced in Flemish bond pattern brick along the first story as well as the entire southern half of the facade. 4'x 4' Bedford limestone panels are located on the second and third stories 104' from Twelve horizontal windows (1'-4" x 3'-0" each) are north to south on the facade. grouped in pairs of threes in each story. This band of windows ascends vertically just south of the limestone panels and provides light to the stairwell at this location The windows are stainless steel with frosted glass panes. on the interior. secondary entrance with one pair of double leaf doors (total of 6'-0" in width) is located 49'-0" from the southeast corner of the building. These aluminum doors are full-light glass and provide an employee entrance as well as a secondary entrance for customers. The door is surrounded by 2-1/4" x 2'-9-1/4" limestone bands, eight equally spaced along either side of the door opening. An aluminum canopy is located above this entrance. A 20'-0"x 14'-8" opening is located at the southern corner of the facade for an overhead freight door. This opening provides access to the internal loading dock in this corner of the building. A horizontal band of windows is located at the fourth story on this facade at the south corner of the building. This band of windows provided light to the employee's lounge at this location. The east facade is topped with a stone coping along its entire length.

South Facade

The south facade of the building is constructed of common brick with window openings at the second, third and fourth levels. A large bank of windows down the west side of this facade allows light into the sewing/alterations room on the second floor, a retail show room for furniture on the third floor and into the upholstery/drapery work room on the fourth floor. The remaining windows provide light to primarily service-oriented areas in the rear of the building. The windows have either aluminum or steel frames and contain frosted glass panes. The south facade is topped with a stone coping along its entire length.

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West Facade

The west facade of the building is constructed of common brick topped with a stone coping along its entire length. There are no window openings on this facade. The Wolf Wile building abuts the wall of the building on the property to the west at the first floor and part of the second floor level.

Interior

The interior of the building is based on an open plan with columns at 24'-0" on center. A center bay is approximately 28'-0" in width, with two side bays each approximately 23'-0" in width. The floor is terazzo poured in place with joints executed in aluminum. The ceiling is finished in plaster and contains recessed incandescent can lights, as well as circular supply and return grilles for air conditioning and heating. Recessed fluorescent lighting — above built-in cabinets and in specially constructed coves — is located throughout the retail sales area of the store. Display cabinets, a few still extant, were planned to fit around the interior columns on the first level — leaving the plan as open as possible for the patrons.

The west interior wall incorporates an open stair from the first floor to the fourth floor. The stair is terazzo poured in place with no joints between tread and riser, resulting in a fluid form for the staircase. The handrails are polished aluminum. Two elevators are located south of the open stair, and this elevator core is clad in highly polished Italian marble. The elevator doors and the cab interiors are stainless steel with recessed lighting in each cab. Just south of the elevator core is a package chute which is a spiral slide with an opening on each level to provide an easy mechanism to send packages to the shipping department in the basement. The east interior wall contains a fire stair core as well as the vestibule for the secondary/employee entrance.

A service area comprises the last two bays of the building on the south end. This service area contains the loading dock, a freight elevator and fire stair on the first floor. On the upper floors, this portion of the building is allocated to storage and receiving for each floor.

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The second and third floors of the building are quite similar in design, with the second floor still containing the various showroom subdivisions, storage areas, dressing rooms and central bookkeeping. The third floor was extensively remodeled in 1958 and is much more open in plan than the second floor. The second and third floor are lit by recessed incandescent lighting supplemented by fluorescent cove lighting in some areas. The flooring is poured concrete with applied wall-to-wall carpeting.

The fourth floor contains a series of smaller rooms used as executive offices, advertising and other support for the store. A tube room is located on this level, as well as the employee lounge and other smaller support and storage spaces. The south third of the building on the fourth floor accommodated the beauty salon and is subsequently divided into washing, drying and styling rooms. Linoleum tile over concrete is the flooring throughout the fourth level.

The fourth floor incorporated a large air-conditioned beauty salon and offices for the credit department, bookkeeping, executive personnel, advertising, employee's lounge and a rest room. In addition, the telephone switchboard and the pneumatic tube room were located on this floor level.

The basement is relatively open with off-season storage shelving throughout. The mechanical room and a substantial portion of the mechanical equipment is located in the northeast corner of the basement. A cold storage fur vault is located in the northwest corner. The parcel chute empties into the rear portion of the basement where parcels were then sorted and made ready for delivery.

The interior of the store was serviced by then state-of-the-art mechanical and electrical equipment which is substantially still in place. A pneumatic tube communications system permitted clerks at nearly every wrapping desk to send bills, invoices, cash sales, etc., to a central area on the second floor where transactions actually took place. Return tubes would supply the customer a receipt issued from the second floor. The tubes also serviced the fourth floor where paperwork would be forwarded and accounts modified accordingly. Remnants of this system are still in place, including the fourth floor tube room, the pumps in the basement to supply the pneumatic force and one remaining pump head on the third floor.

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All departments and shops within the store were designed with expanded sales areas and room to grow. An open display theme was selected throughout the store, with columns and supporting pillars on the first floor built into the merchandising pattern. The interior of the first floor was finished in muted gray, rose and green, with light walnut natural grain cabinets and cases. First floor departments included toilet goods, jewelry, hosiery, handkerchiefs, handbags, gloves, notions, scarves, ladies' shoes, gift shop, the man's shop, books, stationery, umbrellas, closet shop, a hat bar and a sportswear bar.

Deep, wall-to-wall carpeting in pastel shades as well as walls painted in pastel shades are found in all sales areas on the second and third floors of the store. The second floor housed misses' and women's coats, suits, dresses, and sportswear, the bridal shop, evening shop, junior shop, millinery, fur salon, lingerie, corsets and negligees. The second floor contained 24 fitting rooms for apparel departments, alterations rooms, a fur workroom equipped to repair and remodel fur garments. The third floor housed all youth departments -- the Hi-Teen Shop, the Young Kentuckian Shop, the Youth Centre, and the children's shoe, nursery furniture, linen and blanket departments, the yard goods department, draperies and curtains, floor coverings, a photographic studio, a rental library, a public rest room and a powder room. The decoration for the second and third floors was varied in keeping with the merchandise displayed. The background for the sportswear department, for example, was designed in "pecky cypress" -- weathered and pitted wood associated with "summer days on the dock" -- thus the connection to sportswear.

The 1949 store featured open displays of wares on four floors and was designed to be 50% larger than the 1923 building -- 72,000 square feet as opposed to 48,000 square feet. The design motif of the building was streamlined from the exterior massing to the finest of interior details. Wiring, conduits, air conditioning and heating ducts and pneumatic tubes were all concealed in the ceilings of each floor. Recessed incandescent lighting was supplemented by fluorescent cove lighting throughout the entire building.

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A curved terazzo staircase with reflective aluminum handrails connects each floor on the interior. Stair treads were poured with edges curving up to meet the risers with no seams or true corners. The result is a fluid and sculptural element within the box of the store interior. On the first floor, where the staircase intersects the west wall of the interior, walls curve out to emphasize the fluidity of the stair element while at the same time concealing incandescent and fluorescent lighting. Elevator interiors underscore this notion of fluidity. The elevator cars were sheathed in stainless steel carefully crafted to make the condition of the ceiling meeting the wall an event -- the steel sidewall panels roll out gently, concealing the light fixtures and the ceiling disappears behind it.

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The Wolf Wile Department Store Building meets Criterion C and is a significant example of International Style architecture modeled after the body of architectural work associated with the Bauhaus from 1900-1960. The Wolf Wile Department Store Building meets Criteria Consideration G as a resource which is less than 50 years of age which has achieved significance within that 50 year time frame. The building achieves its greatest significance as a finely detailed and restrained example of the International Style which represents the community's and the nation's struggle to reconcile the idea of expanding suburban growth with traditional values of downtowns as centers of community. The building represents an exuberant and optimistic part of American history and culture in the boom following the close of World War II -- a philosophy which incorporates automobile, convenience, streamlined design and, above all, the future.

The Wolf Wile Department Store Building was the mid-20th century location for the Wolf Wile Department Store business which was located in downtown Lexington from its founding in 1912 until the closing of the business in 1992. Constructed in 1949-1950, the structure served as the headquarters for the Wolf Wile Department Store from the post-World War II expansion of commerce in Lexington through the subsequent development of retail uses into suburban shopping malls and the resulting reduction in Main Street retail businesses -- serving as the sole remaining family-owned department store business until its closing in 1992. The building was described at the time of its construction by newspapers as "futuristic", "modernistic", and "swanky" -- recognizing the unusual design characteristics in the context of the local built environment which the building embodied at its completion. This structure is significant as the only building of its type in the community with very few examples in the broader region of Kentucky.

The structure is significant as a physical manifestation of the expansion of commerce across the United States -- a structure with both urban and suburban design features in the International Style, tempered by regional variants and materials -- an East Coast building which finds its way to Main Street Lexington, Kentucky, and is modified in form and in execution by owner, designer and architect.

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Commercial Architecture in Lexington, 1900-1960

In contrast to retail buildings built in downtown Lexington prior to the 1940s, the Wolf Wile Department Store Building, as characterized by Joseph Wile and by comments from lead designer James Pickering (Amos Parrish & Co.), was designed from the inside out. Rough calculations were made for the sales and space needs each department, a rough size of the building was determined and the building was articulated with a taut, skin-like wrapper on each building facade (Joseph S. Wile, Sr. interview, 1/17/1996). The result is a simple and finely detailed structure with characteristics of the International Style -- asymmetrical facades, flat roofs, streamlined forms, little decorative detailing, etc.

Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most retail buildings constructed in Lexington, and throughout many small towns and cities in the United States seemed designed from the outside in. They contained highly ornamented and articulated facades, with decoration based on natural and geometric motifs. These store buildings had large expanses of glass at the first floor level for display windows — a mechanism by which customers could view wares for sale while passing by on the street. Regardless of use above the first floor area, traditional commercial buildings contained a large number of windows on the upper stories of buildings. Commercial buildings in Lexington from this time period were oriented to Main Street, with little concern for other faces of the building — the primary decoration was concentrated for maximum impact on the front facade. Interior uses were not easily read by looking at building facades.

The predominant architectural styles of commercial buildings between 1900-1960 in downtown Lexington include the Colonial Revival style, the Commercial style, the Neo-Classical Revival style, and the Arts & Crafts style. Buildings constructed in these styles, prevalent in the first two decades of the 20th century, mirrored the considerable population growth and substantial urban development at this time. Taller structures were constructed around the Courthouse Square to provide business locations for banking and other commercial institutions. The most prominent of these buildings on the 20th century skyline was the ca. 1913 McKim Meade & White-designed Fayette National Bank Building, at the northeast corner of Main and Upper streets. This building combines Neo-Classical and Commercial details and the structure set the tone for much of the commercial development along Main Street. Italianate style structures from the last quarter of the nineteenth century predominate the buildings elsewhere along Main Street and throughout the Downtown.

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These three or four story structures occupy many blocks, providing a consistent background of buildings for more high style, often larger, skyscrapers and public buildings.

From 1900-1960, architectural styles featuring decorative elements relating to colonial roots seemed to have a stronger influence on commercial architecture in the downtown area. Several of these historic resources comprise the block where the Wolf Wile Department Store Building is located. The property at the corner of Main Street and the Harrison Avenue Viaduct is occupied by the Lafayette Hotel, constructed ca. 1920-21. This twelve story structure, at 200 East Main Street, exhibits restrained details of the Colonial Revival style and provides a architectural cornerstone for this block of East Main Street. The block also features the ca. 1922 Kentucky Theatre, 214 East Main Street, with its highly decorative glazed brick and metal facade in the Neo-Classical style. The Switow Building, at 218 East Main Street, is designed and constructed in the more rare Arts & Crafts (Mission) style, complete with natural brick and multi-paned windows under a heavily bracketed cornice overhang.

International Style of Commercial Building Design

The International style is represented with only a few buildings in the Central Kentucky region -- none as refined nor as prominent as the Wolf Wile Department Store Building. The International Style, modeled loosely after the many works of the German Bauhaus from World War I until World War II, featured characteristics including building form which followed building function, form defined as volume rather than mass, thin exterior and interior surface materials emphasizing the "skin" of the building on the "bones" of the structural elements, structure used as a grid to regulate the building plan and section, and avoidance of applied decoration throughout the exterior and interior.

The International style was not just a different system of articulation, it was an aesthetic which delineated new ways of designing, constructing and occupying buildings. Spurred on by the search for a new style following World War I, the International style was far more influential in Europe than in the United States. Only after World War II did United States designers embrace this new aesthetic and employ its use for government and private residential and commercial buildings. In Lexington following World War II, traditional buildings in the Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival styles were much more common than their International style counterparts. This was reflective of a conservative trend in Lexington toward modern design in the community.

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Because of this conservative design environment, the singularity of the Wolf Wile Department Store Building as a "cutting edge" design solution was of great significance to the community.

The International style, as a collected body of work, was an effort by architects and designers of twentieth century to articulate a new set of design rules and a design language which was responsive to a rapidly changing population. Within the parameters of the International style, the form of the building followed its function. For example, previous to the advent of the International style, commercial structures followed a standard formula of a highly decorative facade fronting on a main thoroughfare with a simple box behind this decorative facade. International style buildings were usually designed from the inside out, taking the necessary functions of the building proposed and uniting those in a thin skin. The result of this design methodology is a collection of International style buildings which are described as volumes rather than the more traditional "outside in" depiction of buildings as a mass of material from which is carved functional space.

Perhaps because of the advent of structural steel by the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the refinement and extensive use of this material in the twentieth century, International style buildings feature structural grids as both a means of defining space and a means of support for the structure. Structural grids varied in spacing and in height and depth, but provided an additive method of building. Much like the ca. 1851 Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton, the first building to employ and exploit this structural system for its own aesthetic, International style buildings feature the structural grid as an ordering and support system -- an aesthetic which is borne out in plan and in three dimensions on the interior.

The lack of applied surface decoration on International style buildings is perhaps the most obvious hallmark of this style. Buildings designed in this aesthetic were often referred to as stream-lined, because of their resemblance to functional items designed and used in the industrial design industry. Parallels between building and machine began to be discussed and elaborated as design motifs by architects throughout the United States and in Europe.

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Commercial Activity in Post World War II Lexington

The great expansion of goods, services, housing stock and the tremendous growth of the United States economy following World War II caused a phenomenal expansion of cities throughout the United States including Lexington. Historian Harvey Green notes "middle-class settlement patterns, improved roads, and the pervasiveness of the automobile brought about the growth of suburban shopping centers" (The Uncertainty of Everyday Life: 1915-1945). Moreover, Green cites that "merchants figured that the suburban middle-class was a more profitable market, and that suburban land was still cheap enough to build both stores and free parking lots. The suburban shopping center could also be pitched as safer and more exclusive than the city store."

Lexington, too, was experiencing changes in its urban geography, including the construction of whole new quadrants of housing, the expansion of industrial and construction business concerns and the subsequent development of the suburbs in the south end of the county. Historian John D. Wright, Jr., notes "in the postwar years, Lexington and Fayette County shared in the economic resurgence that characterized the nation as a whole, due to the pent-up consumer demand for goods and services." However, Wright points out "the general pattern of life in this Bluegrass city [Lexington] in the years immediately following the war was a continuation of the pre-war era. Few could have predicted the tremendous changes of the next thirty-five years that would transform this community into one of the fastest growing cities in the United States." (Lexington: Heart of the Bluegrass).

The Wile family began planning a new department store building in 1948 which would cater to the increased consumer demand in the community and respond to changes in the retail environment. Locally, as elsewhere, old style retail establishments were giving way to more modern, convenient and efficient stores, incorporating ready-to-wear clothing as well as goods and services for the entire home. In some locales, population shifts decentralizing American cities led to the creation of a new architectural form, the suburban shopping mall, but not until the early 1950s. In Lexington, however, the idea of a suburban shopping mall was not realized until the 1960s. In the late 1940s, and throughout the entire 1950s, Lexington residents continued to consider the historic downtown as the exclusive domain of retail trade. The Wiles intended their building would respond to changes in shopping patterns and consumer taste for more modern and streamlined stores.

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Moreover, the Wiles were cognizant of promoting an up-to-date image balanced with respect for tradition which resulted in a radical departure in the exterior treatment of their new building tempered by advertisements and goods and services more in line with the traditional Wolf Wile shopping experience.

At the time of construction of the Wolf Wile Department Store Building, Joseph Wile noted the family's strong desire to remain in the heart of the retail area downtown. Moreover, Mr. Wile explained the family's strong desire to own their own building as opposed to leasing from another building owner. Mr. Wile also noted the decision to move east in the downtown followed a pattern of development accepted in the community -- moving along Main Street from west to east (Joseph S. Wile, Sr. interview, 1/17/1996). Mr. Wile's assertions are borne out in the development patterns of the Lexington community leading up to the construction of the 1949 Wolf Wile Department Store Building and in subsequent years. Wright notes that by the 1970's, "the entire character of downtown was profoundly changed as the heavily concentrated retail nucleus was atomized, spreading out into numerous malls and shopping centers ringing the city, and was replaced by high-rise banks, office buildings, and hotels. The completion of the vast interstate highway system, with a strategic juncture at Lexington, accelerated this transformation" (Lexington: Heart of the Bluegrass). Turfland Mall, Lexington's first suburban shopping mall, was constructed ca. 1965 at Harrodsburg and Lane Allen Roads, approximately four miles south and west from Main Street. Subsequent malls were developed in the south end of the community and now have replaced downtown as the major area for retail trade.

Wolf Wile Department Store Company, 1912-1992

Simon Wolf moved to Lexington in 1890 to work in his brother-in-law's mercantile business, Kaufman-Straus Company, a clothing store for women located near the courthouse. Wolf's other real estate interests were represented in the downtown area and in the development and subsequent sale of numerous factory buildings on the western edge of the downtown. In the first decade of the 20th century, Wolf convinced Dolph Wile to move from Louisville to Lexington to enter the clothing industry. In 1912, Wolf and Wile bought out the interest in the Lexington branch of Kaufman-Straus, and renamed the business as the Wolf Wile Department Store with "no change in stock or business anticipated" (Lexington Herald, 1/12/1912).

In its 80 years of operation, this department store has been housed in three locations in Lexington. From 1912-1920, the business was located on Main Street between Mill and Broadway (west four blocks from the current building). That structure burned

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in January 1920 and Wolf Wile's sought temporary headquarters in the Hernando Building three blocks east on Main Street between Limestone and the Harrison Avenue viaduct. By 1923, the Wolf Wile Department Store leased a building adjacent to Union Station, the main train passenger depot in downtown Lexington. Erected at a cost of \$200,000, this 1923 building was owned by Leonard G. Cox and designed by the Lexington architectural firm Frankel and Curtis, the architectural firm which would later design the 1949 headquarters for the Wolf Wile Department Store. The interior of the 1923 home for Wolf Wile's incorporated "magnificent fixtures, works of art, windows which are revelations" as well as "employees which are loyal to traditions of Wolf Wile's" making the store "an ideal place to shop." (Lexington Herald, 9/30/1923).

By 1948, the Wolf Wile Department Store had physically outgrown its 1923 Italian Renaissance-styled headquarters. Loading dock access was limited and sales floor areas were increasingly cramped and inefficient. A site was located by the Wile family one block east from the 1923 store and in 1948, a lease to buy this property was executed.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wolf Wile Department Store Building

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Design of the Wolf Wile Result of Local-National Partnership

Dolph Wile, president of the Wolf Wile Department Store, sent his son, Joseph S. Wile Sr., then vice president of the company, to New York City to interview store designers and to visit shopping emporiums in the modern style in the east. Ultimately, Joseph Wile met with Amos Parrish & Company, the selected store designer for the project. The junior Wile returned to Lexington with many modern shopping ideas and worked over a two year period with the New York design firm and with the Lexington architectural firm Frankel & Curtis to create a new vision for the future of shopping in Lexington in the downtown (Joseph S. Wile, Sr. interview, 1/17/1996).

The design for the Wolf Wile Department Store Building is the result of a partnership between the Lexington-based architectural firm, Frankel & Curtis, and a nationally recognized store design firm, Amos Parrish & Co., New York City, New York. This collaborative partnership, with much urging from the owners, created a special building -- a building which maintains the retail tradition of Wolf Wile's on Main Street and re-wraps the tradition in a Bauhaus-era vocabulary. The building was constructed at a time when newer suburban forms for traditional buildings were being sought. The design for the Wolf Wile Department Store respects the retail shopping philosophy inherent in buildings on Main Street and also departs from this philosophy with an exterior that is decidedly suburban and contemporary.

The 1949-50 store was an architectural marvel -- one which was described at length in newspapers of the day (Lexington Herald, 5/31/1950, pp. 17-20; Lexington Leader, 5/31/1950, pp. 15-25). Termed "futuristic," "modernistic," and "swanky," this modern facility for the Wolf Wile Department Store contained design features indicative of sweeping changes in the department store industry in the United States. Four stories in height, this International style building followed design motifs strongly identified with the Bauhaus in Germany and then carried to the United States shortly before World War II. Following a suburban retail design scheme with basic blank walls and an undercut storefront/display window, the Wolf Wile Department Store Building represented the changing focus of design in the United States following World War II. Wolf Wile's new store was described as "an achievement in architectural and sales designing," as well as a "building constructed with the future in mind." (Lexington Leader, 5/31/1950).

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Wolf Wile Department Store Building

Fayette County, KY

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When the Wolf Wile Department Store Building was designed, the idea of a highly decorated front facade oriented to Main Street was abandoned in favor of a display window/entrance system which sought to connect outside with inside -- a freeflowing view and path into and out of the building. To achieve this design concept, store designers placed three pairs of double herculite doors side by side and concentrated the location of large display windows adjacent to the entry. The result of this design choice was an occupiable display area and vestibule where customers observed a mercantile vista through the front entrance and display areas. overhanging canopy unites the entryway and display windows and serves as a sort of porch to cover this occupiable thickened front facade. In contrast, the remainder of the building is clad in a tight stone and brick veneer -- a planar skin for the large volume in the four-floor building. A pylon provides a bookend on the northwest corner of the front facade, separating the Wolf Wile Department Store Building from the neighboring building to its west. While somewhat reminiscent of vertical sign systems from earlier twentieth century buildings, this pylon physically separates this International Style building from its neighbors along Main Street.

Three stainless steel tapered columns support the overhang above the first floor entrance to this building. Traditionally, columns have been used to help articulate decoration of earlier nineteenth and twentieth century buildings and to further provide structural support in the front facade wall of these structures. The columns, as designed for the Wolf Wile Department Store, are pulled away from the plane of the front facade and pulled into the public space of the sidewalk. These stainless steel columns are free from decoration and articulation. They serve as an additional means of articulating the occupiable public/private space in the front wall system.

Traditionally, corner buildings in Lexington and elsewhere have contained large openings on both street facades, and some sort of diagonal entry at the actual corner. Wolf Wile's departs from this tradition with its highly rectilinear composition and plan, avoiding reference to the corner of Main Street and Quality Street. A display window opens on the Quality Street (east) facade in deference to the pedestrian traffic crossing at the corner, but the absence of doors on that side at the northeast corner of the building, reinforces the primary importance of the Main Street (north) entry facade.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wolf Wile Department Store Building Fayette County, KY

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Despite the differences between traditional commercial structures and the 1949 Wolf Wile Department Store Building, the designer, architect and owner of the Wolf Wile Department Store took measures to create ways for the building to fit in to the existing design context of the community. The building is built of brick, stone, and metal, copying the traditional use of these materials from earlier in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The brick veneer is laid in a Flemish bond pattern as requested by the owners. This brick pattern mimics the nineteenth century pattern popular in Lexington and throughout Kentucky. Stone is used as a second major building material, again echoing the use of this building material for foundations and architectural details in predecessor buildings. Flagstone is used to soften the transition from the concrete sidewalk on the exterior to terazzo floor on the interior. A highly articulate system of red and green granite helps to distinguish between storefront areas and wall area -- between open and closed. International Style buildings constructed elsewhere in the United States might have been constructed of granite, steel and glass -- glass boxes with little relation to the adjacent and surrounding buildings. The Wolf Wile building is designed with the same stylistic features of the International Style but in more native brick, limestone and marble -materials customarily used in the construction of commercial structures in Lexington and in the region.

Despite the fact that the 1949 store was considered very modern, the Wile family, as it had for the opening of the 1923 store, carefully constructed a publicity campaign in the local newspapers of the day to remind the public of the firm's history in the community and the quality of goods and services which were associated with the store. Advertisements mention local ownership and management as a key factor in attracting customers to the department store. Above all, convenience and quality service are stressed in these advertisements:

"Come tonight and see our spacious new departments so beautifully appointed and arranged for your convenience and shopping pleasure. Everything is so excitingly bright and new ... all so smoothly arranged for simplified shopping, yet we cling to the same long-term quality that had been traditional with Wolf Wile's for sixty years...and we promise that same quality will continue.

Come tonight and see the exciting new merchandise that will put your head in the clouds...but priced in the same reasonable, down-to-earth manner that has always prevailed at Wolf Wile's.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet Wolf Wile Department Store Building

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Come tonight and browse through our offices and service departments to see the scenes-behind-the-scenes that make the new Wolf Wile's a masterpiece of efficiency.

Come tonight, and be our guests...let us show you through Kentucky's Finest Department Store." (Lexington Leader, 5/31/1950)

The Wolf Wile Department Store Building was constructed in a time of great change in American culture. The building asserted a new presence on Main Street, Lexington, Kentucky, in a way that no building had prior or no building has since. In 1949-50, the owners of this department store structure recognized the value in remaining on Main Street in the heart of the retailing community. Moreover, the owners recognized the need for something different along Main Street which would catch the customers' eyes and provide a marketing mechanism to draw customers into the store. This building respects Main Street traditions of design and expands them in suburban ways and clads these traditions in International Style language unparalleled in the community. The owners and designers of the building carefully draw this building to its predecessor neighbors through material type and use in the design.

The building designers' vision for the Wolf Wile Department Store Building was for a model building which would represent downtown Lexington of the future. Joseph S. Wile, Sr., noted the design schematic laid out by Amos Parrish as one which was intended for the remainder of the same block on East Main Street -- a series of stores in a modern style united by a common covered walkway, and thus creating a semi-public occupiable space on Main Street. (Joseph S. Wile, Sr. interview, 1/17/1996). The result of the designers' collective efforts to initiate a new more suburban vision for downtown Lexington was not fully realized. The Wolf Wile Department Store Building, as designed, was the cornerstone to a new suburban model downtown Lexington. By the time the community was ready to fully embrace this strategic direction, suburban development overwhelmed any attempt to concentrate the retail core in the commercial downtown. The Wolf Wile Department Store Building is a richly detailed, simply designed modern structure which illustrated this bold new move by the Wile family to combine important tradition with a forward-thinking image for Main Street. It remains an invaluable resource in understanding this critical juncture in the community's development history.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet Wolf Wile Department Store Building Fayette County, KY

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Wolf Wile Department Store Building

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary consists of the city lot located between Main Street and Water Street beginning at the corner of Main Street and Quality Street and proceeding south by southeast approximately 209 feet to the southeast corner of the lot, thence proceding west by northwest 80 feet to the southwest corner of the lot, thence proceding north by northeast 211 feet to the northwest corner of the lot, thence returning back to the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary described above encompasses the structure and the land on which it developed.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wolf Wile Department Store Building

Fayette County, KY

Section number Misc. Page ____1

Resource Name:

Wolf Wile Department Store Building

Location:

Fayette County, Kentucky

Photos by:

LFUCG Division of Historic Preservation

Date of photos:

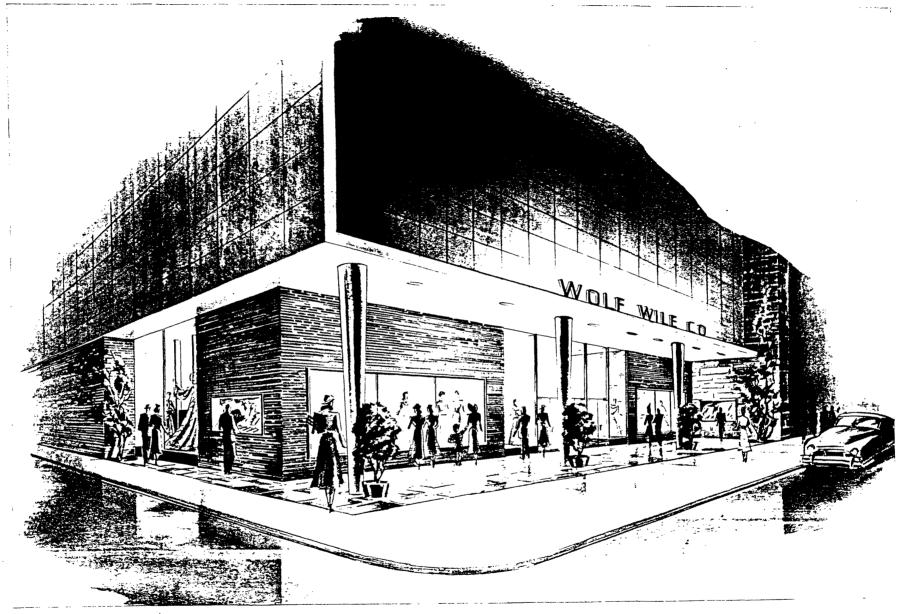
January 31, 1996

Negative source:

LFUCG Division of Historic Preservation

Photograph descriptions by number:

- 1) Looking west by southwest along East Main Street. Wolf Wile Building in center of photograph.
- 2) Looking south by southwest. Three quarter view of Main Street (front) facade and Quality Street (east) facade.
- 3) Looking south at front facade and main entrance doors.
- 4) Looking east by southeast along East Main Street.
- 5) Looking west at Quality Street facade.
- 6) Looking north by northeast. Three quarter view of Water Street (rear) facade and west facade (abuts adjacent building).
- 7) Looking west at secondary/employee entrance on Quality Street facade.
- 8) Looking north by northeast at front entrance doors and display windows, first floor interior.
- 9) Looking south by southwest at first floor interior. Elevator and open stair in background of view.
- 10) Looking west at elevator core, first floor interior.
- 11) Looking north by northwest at elevator core and stair, first floor interior.
- 12) Looking west by southwest at first floor interior stair.
- 13) Looking north at second floor interior.
- 14) Looking west by southwest at second floor interior stair.
- Looking east at storage cabinet for alterations, reused from previous store and reassembled in alterations room, rear second floor interior.
- 16) Looking north by northwest at third floor interior.
- 17) Looking north by northeast at basement interior.
- 18) Looking north by northeast at mechanical room interior, basement.
- 19) Looking north at fire stair interior (typical).
- 20) Looking west at service stair and freight elevator at loading dock, first floor rear.
- 21) Looking east by southeast at tube room, fourth floor interior.
- 22) Detail of pneumatic tube head, fourth floor box chute room.



Welf Wile's LEXINGTON-KY. DESIGNED BY
AMOS PARRISH & CO
500 5H AVE
N-Y-C

A DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING

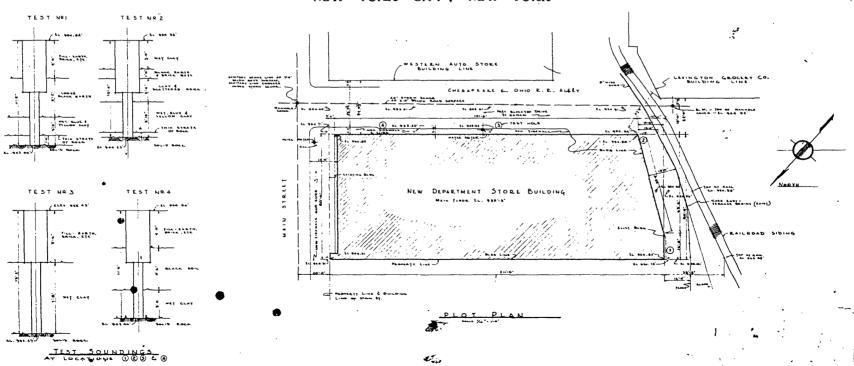
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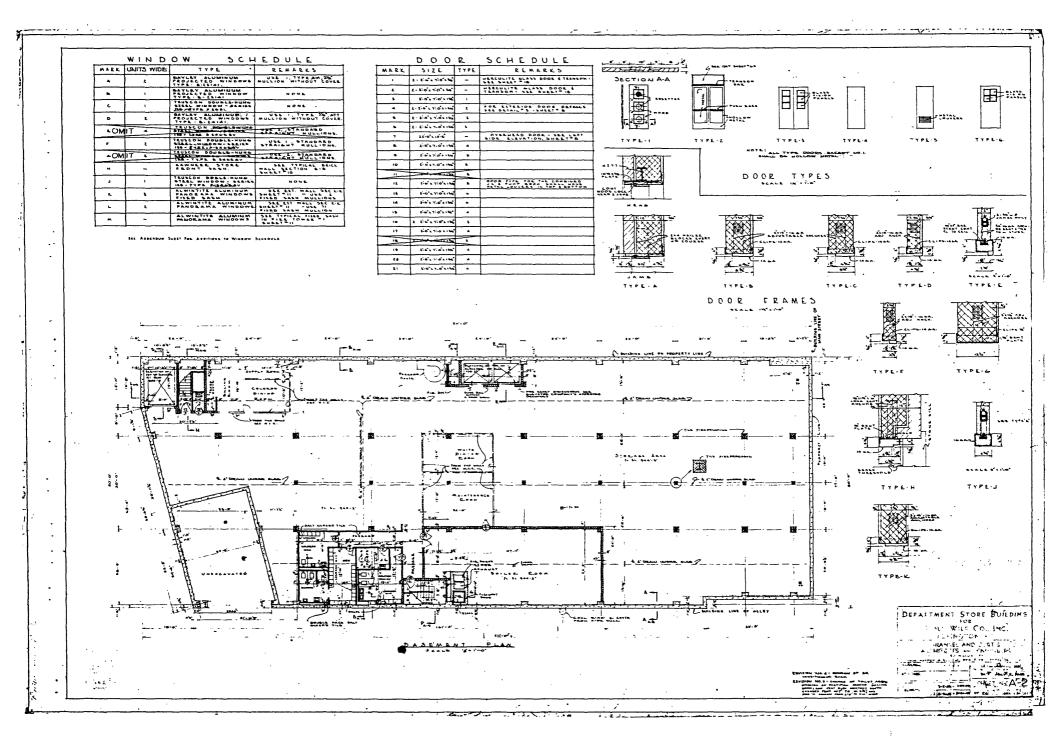
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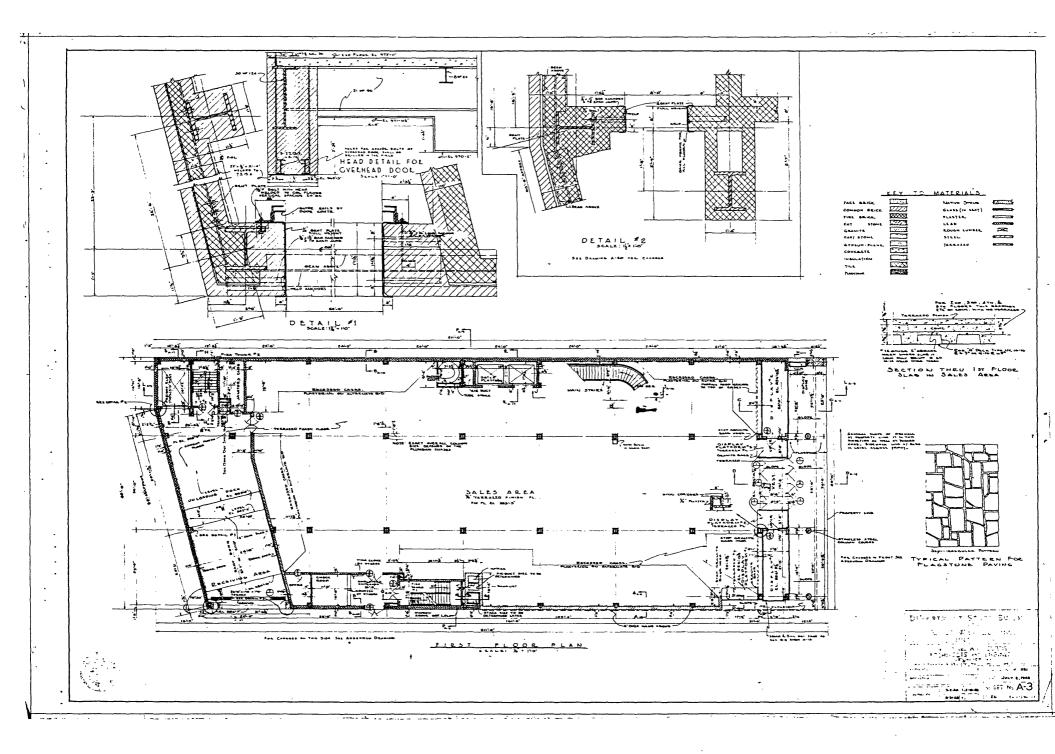
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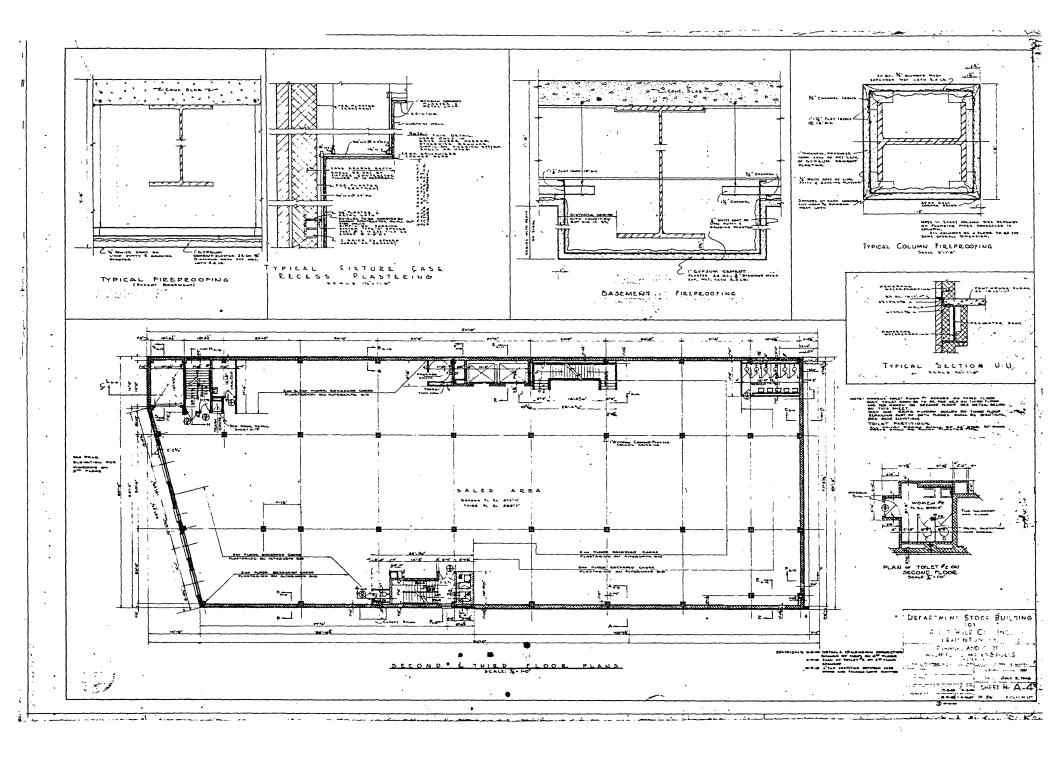
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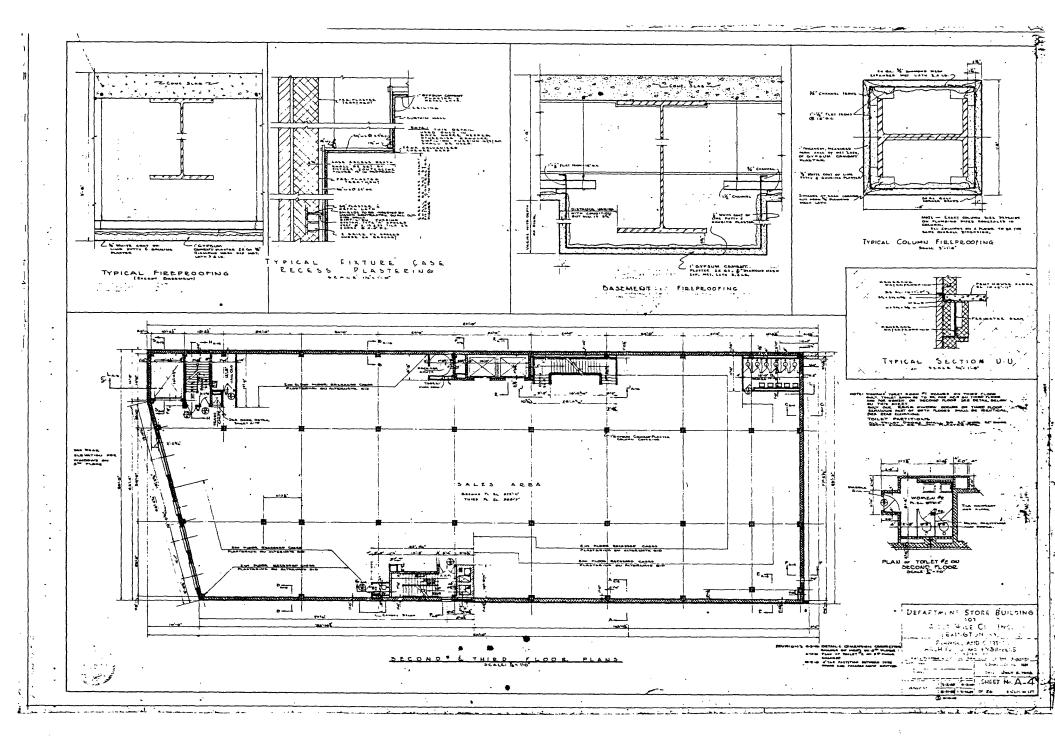
AMOS PARRISH & CO., INC. STORE DESIGNERS NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

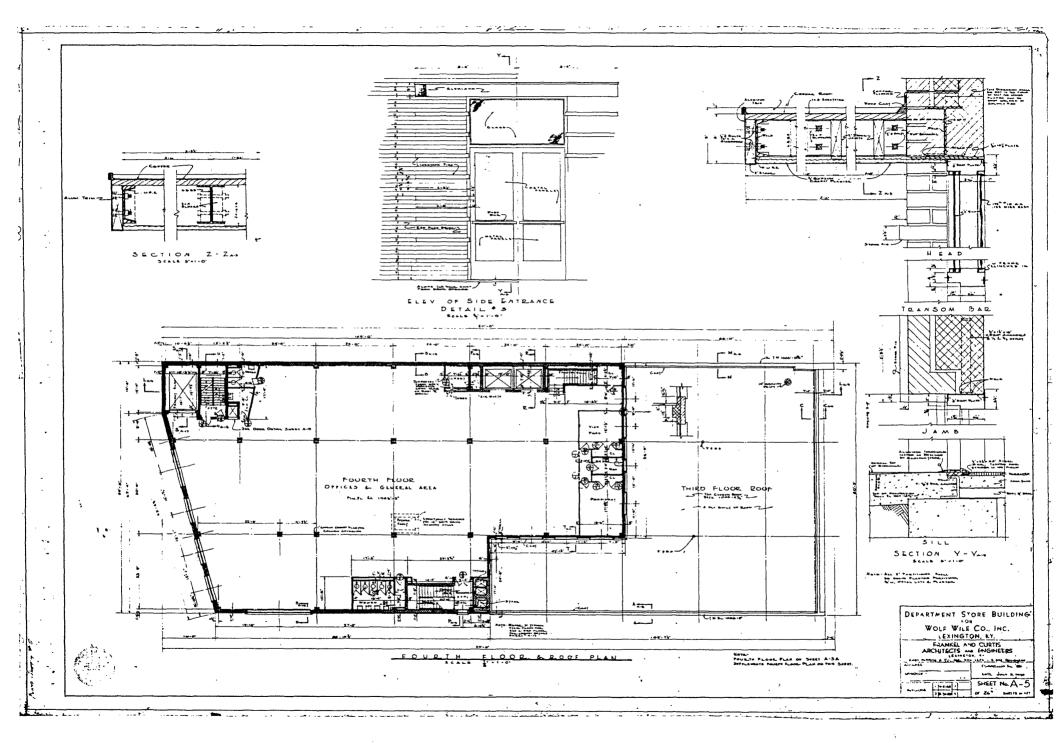


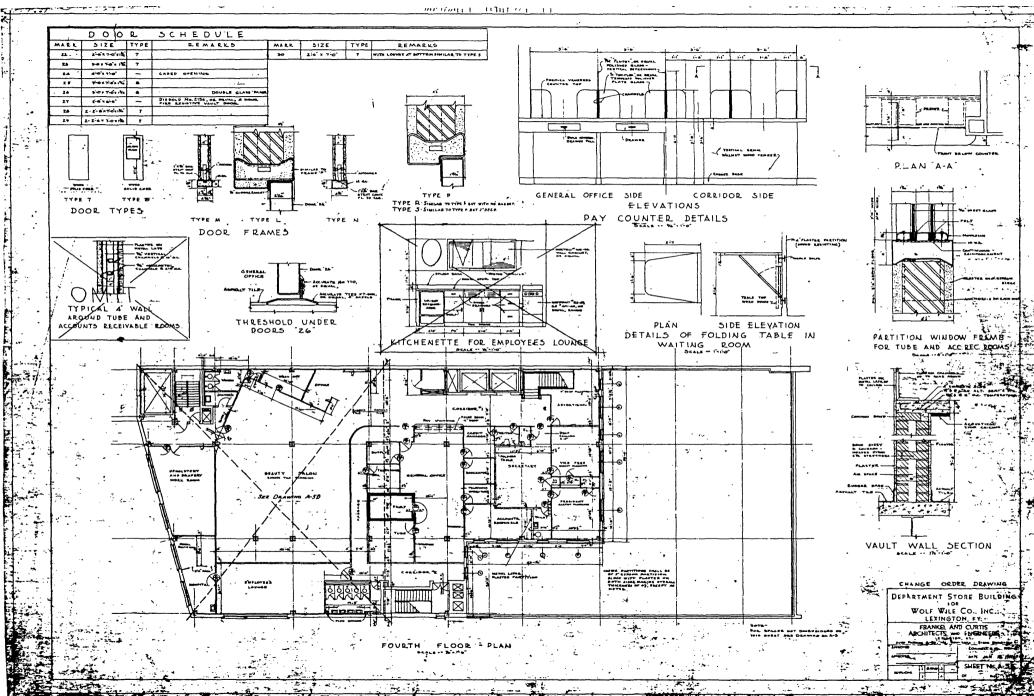


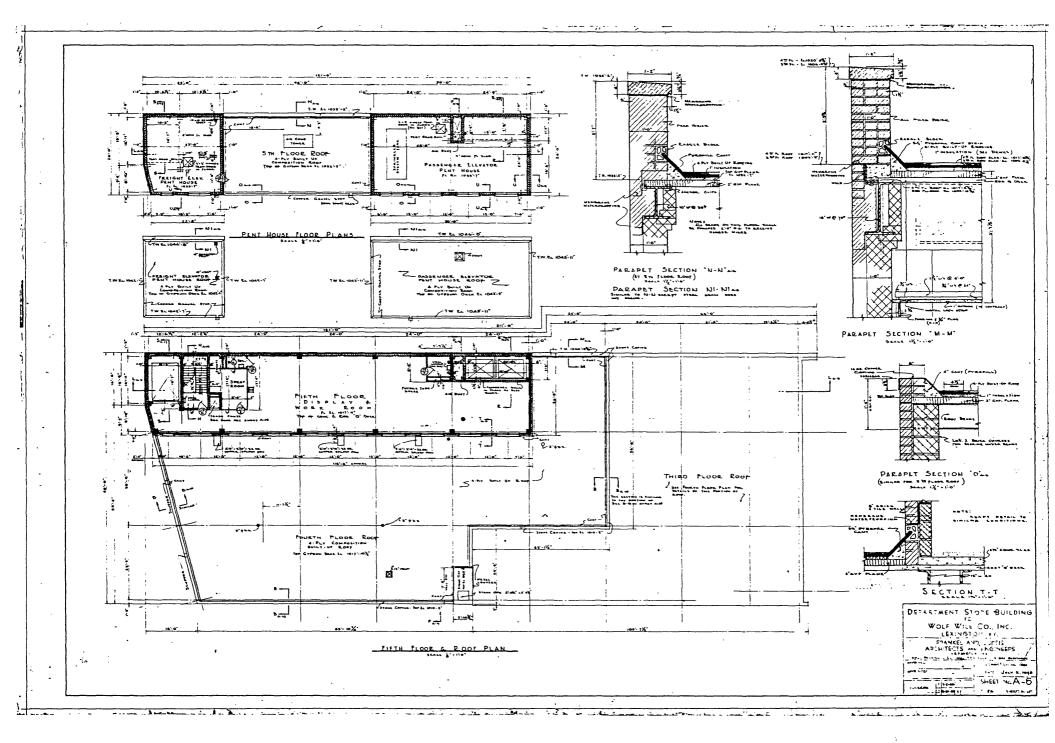


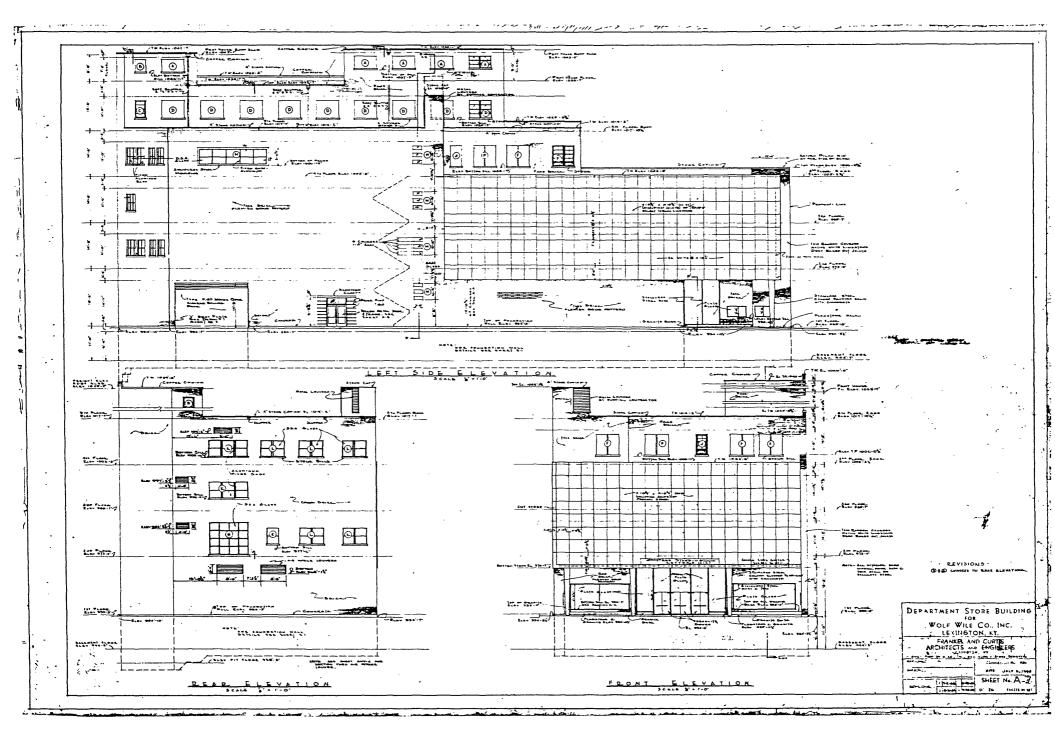


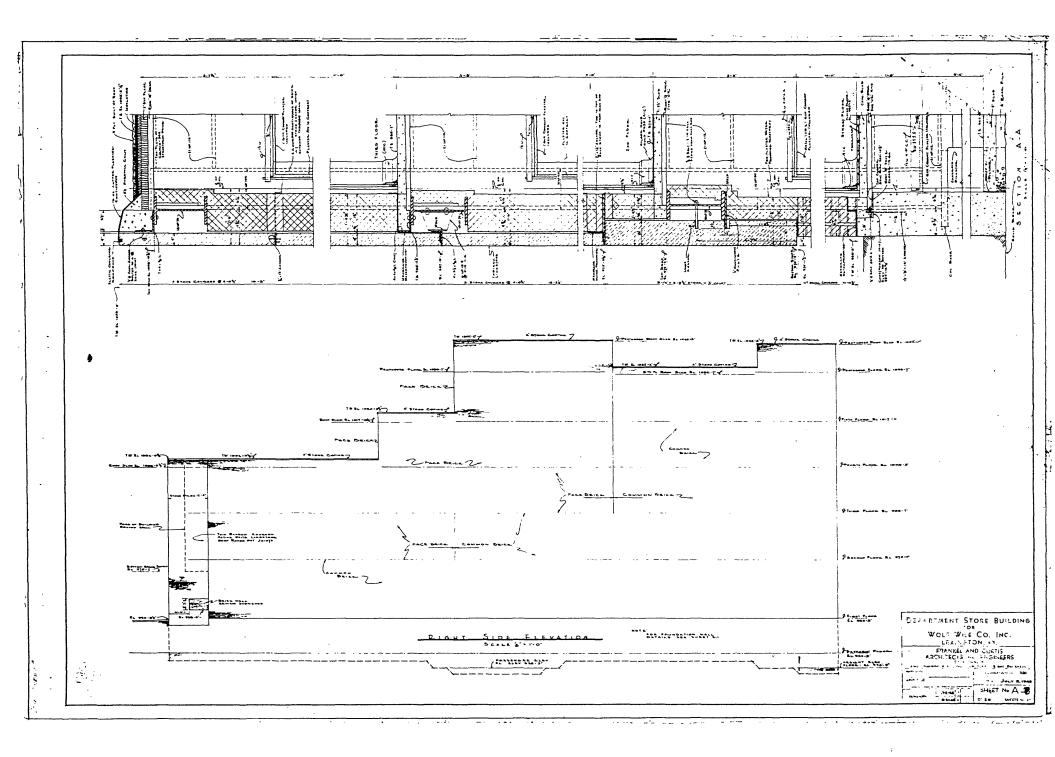


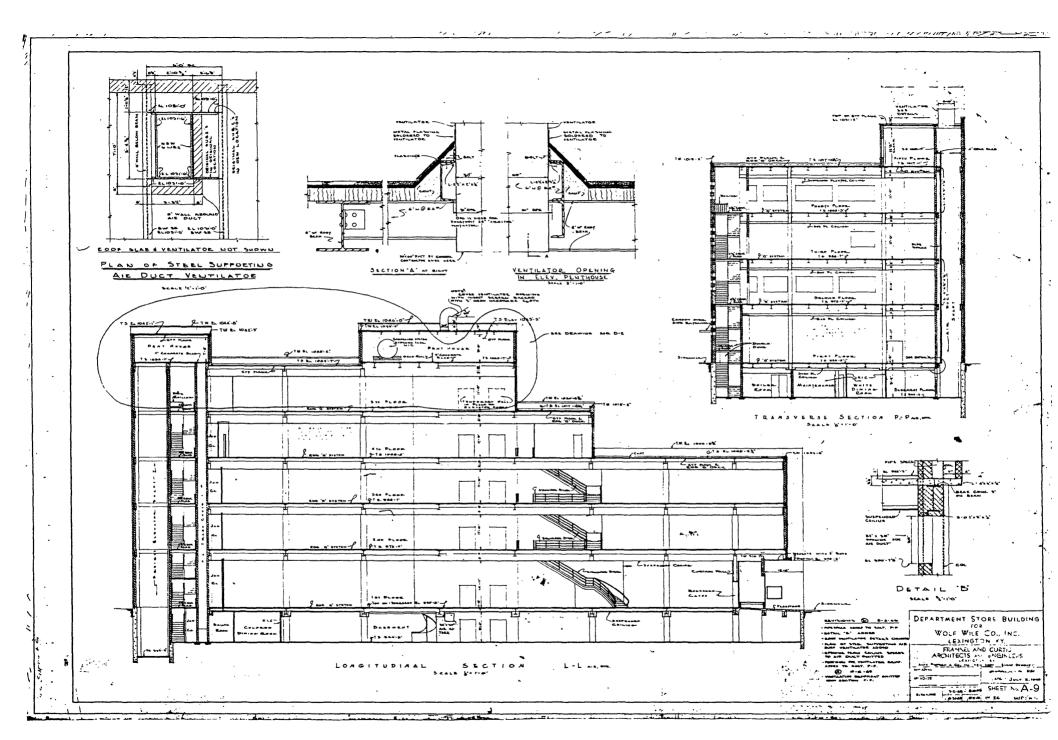


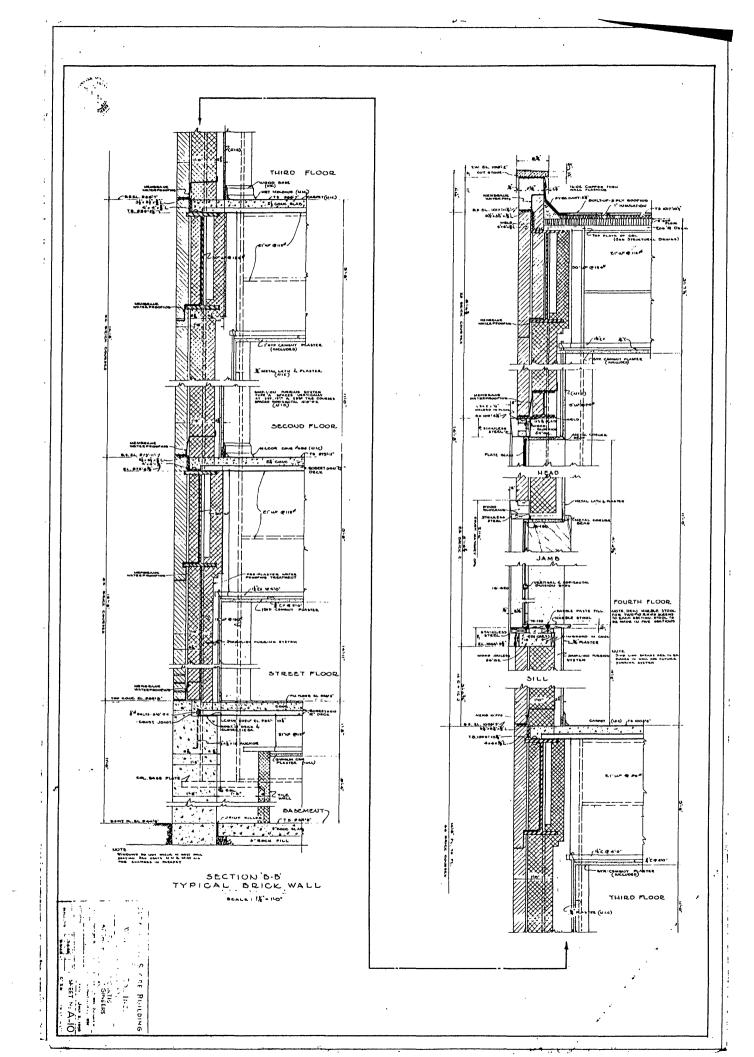


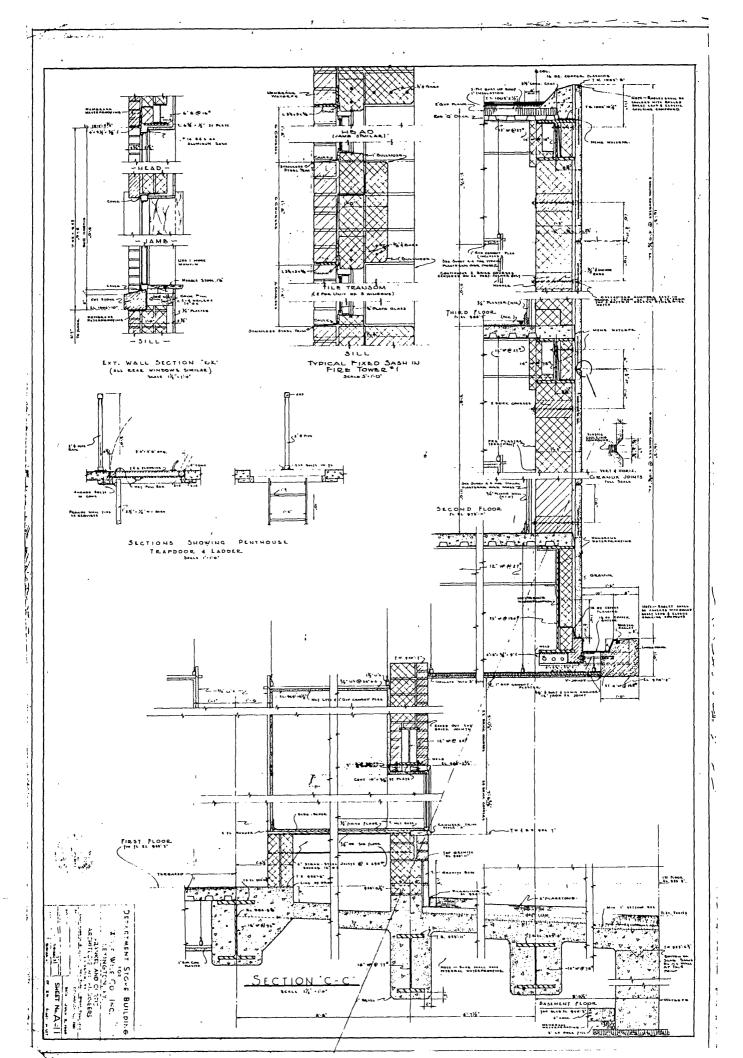


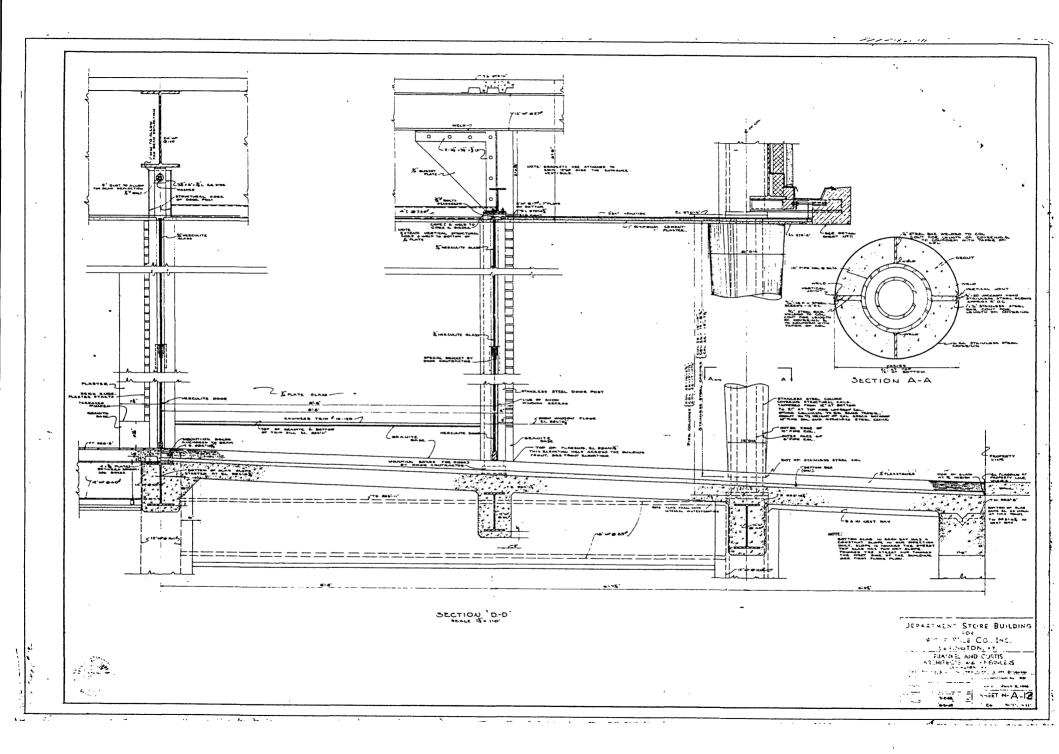


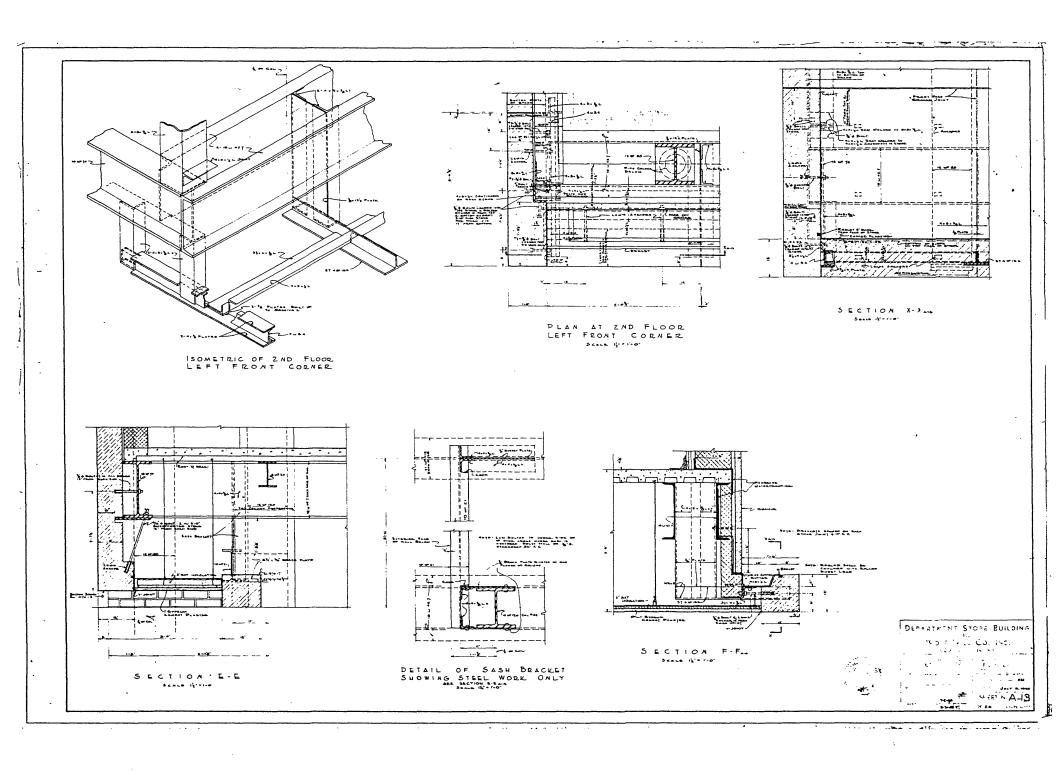




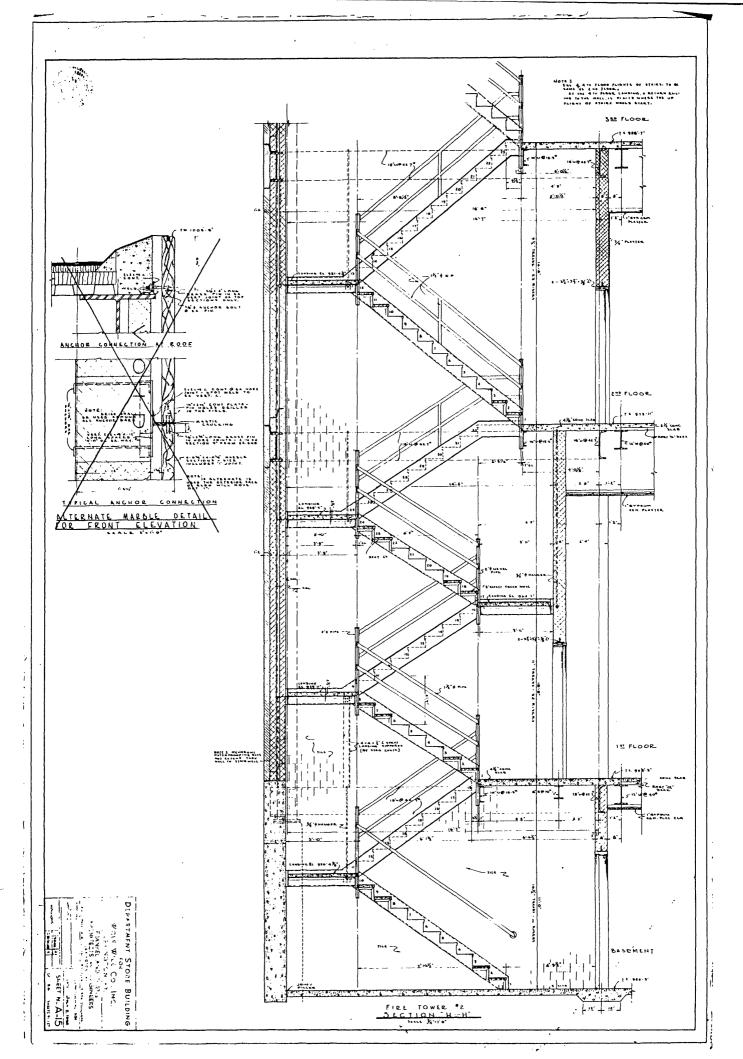


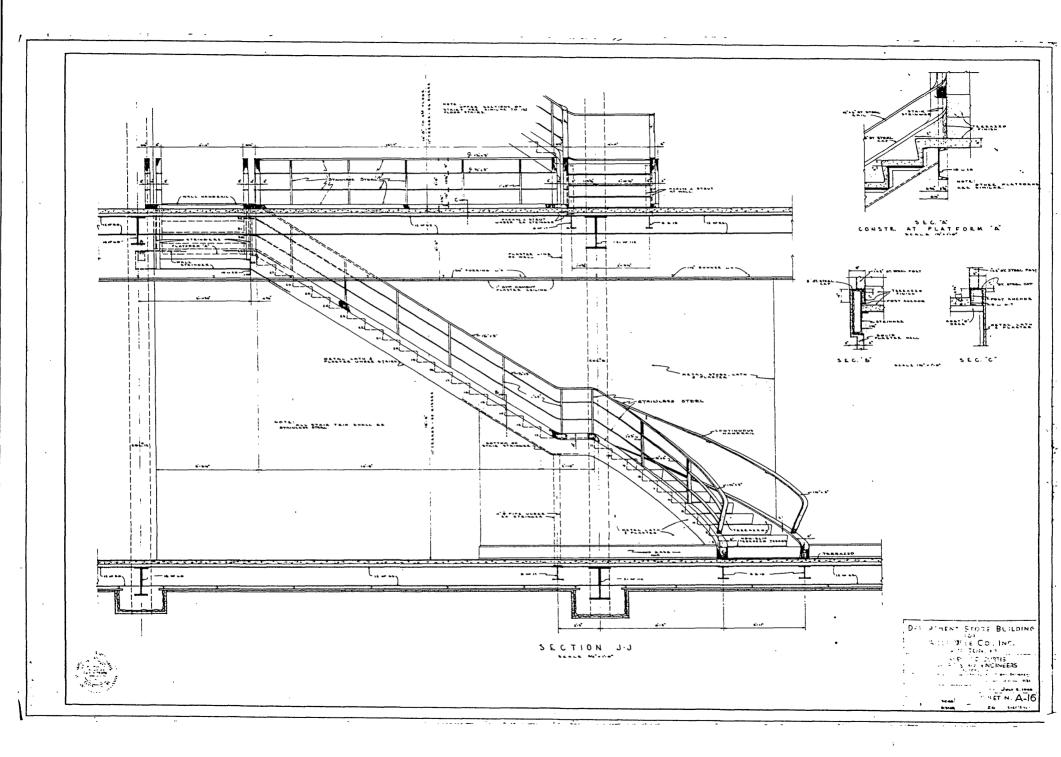


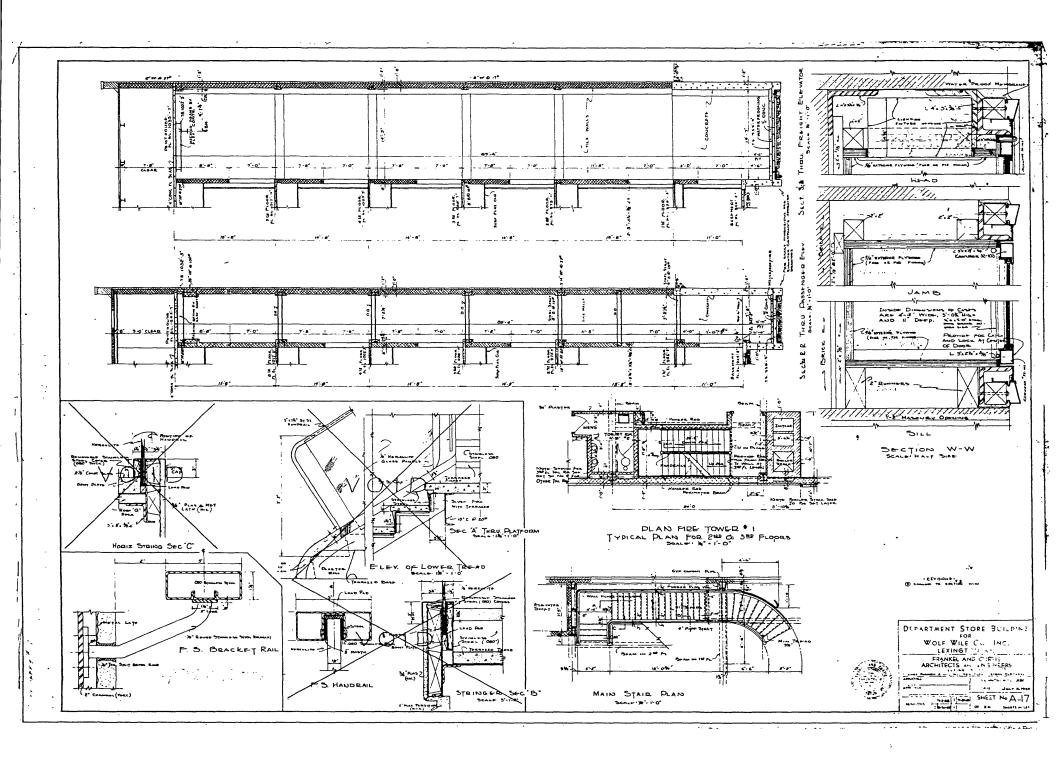


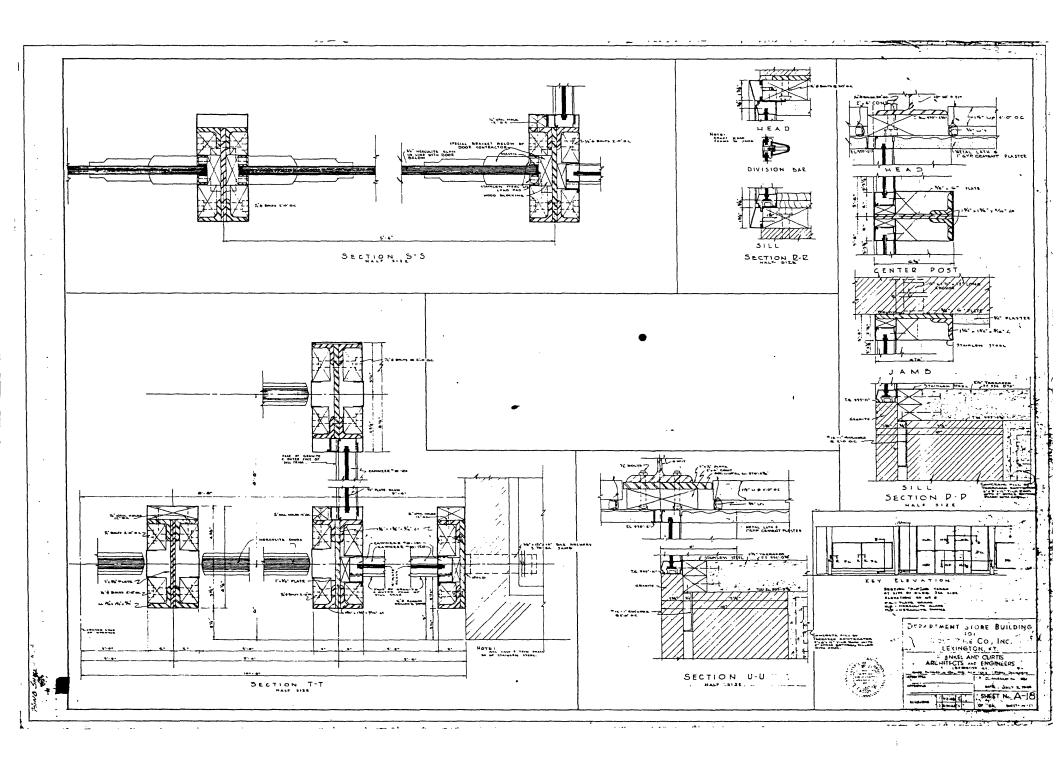


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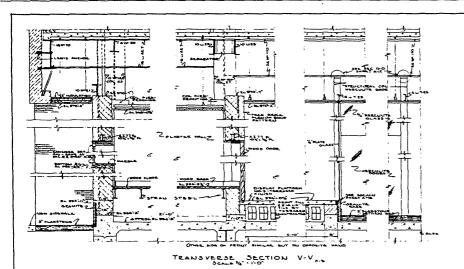








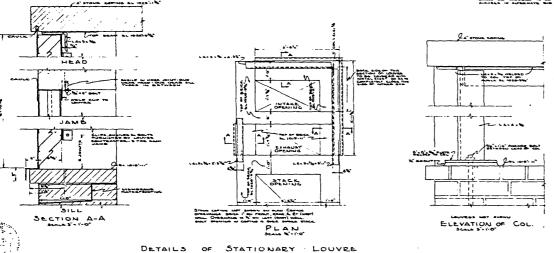
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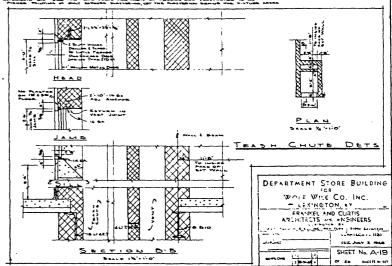


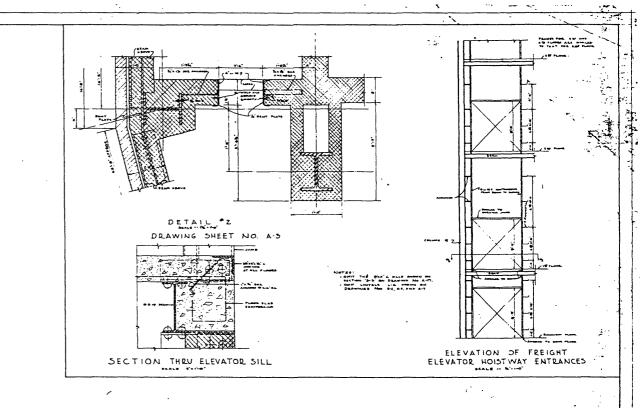
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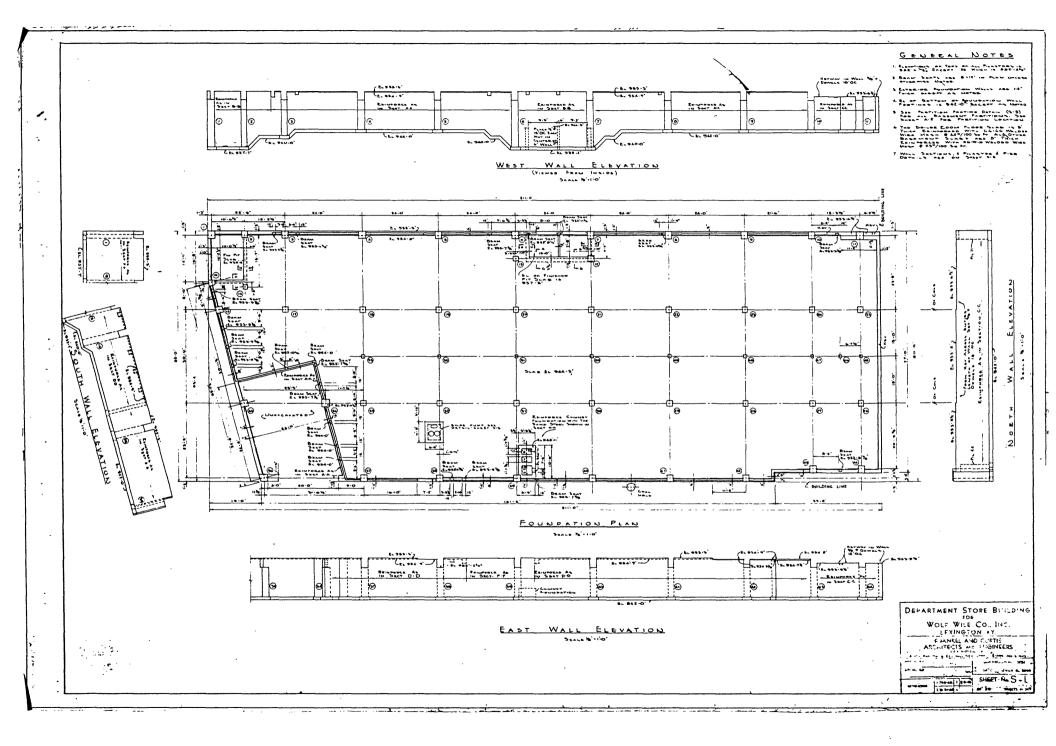
DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING

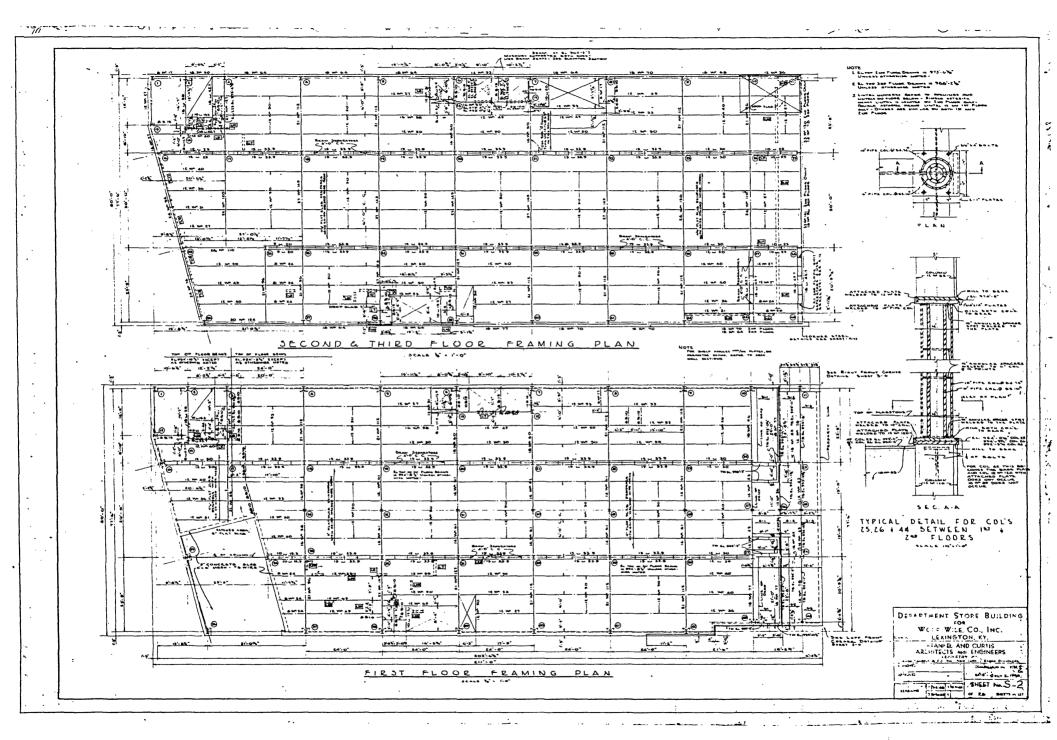
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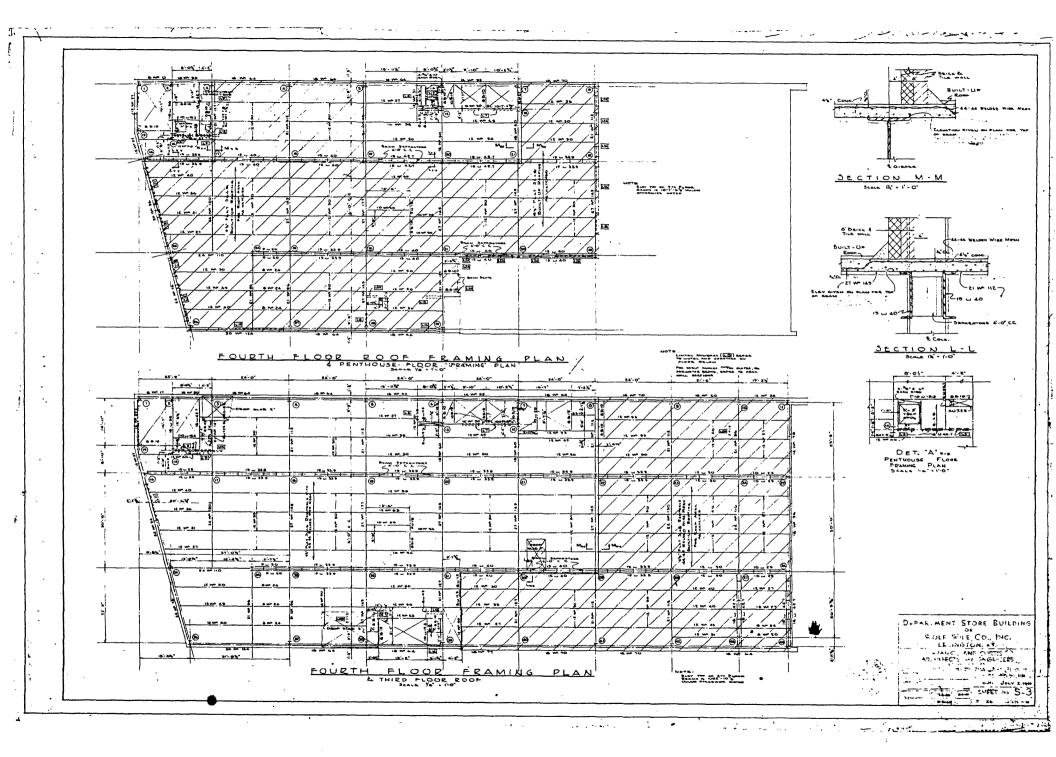
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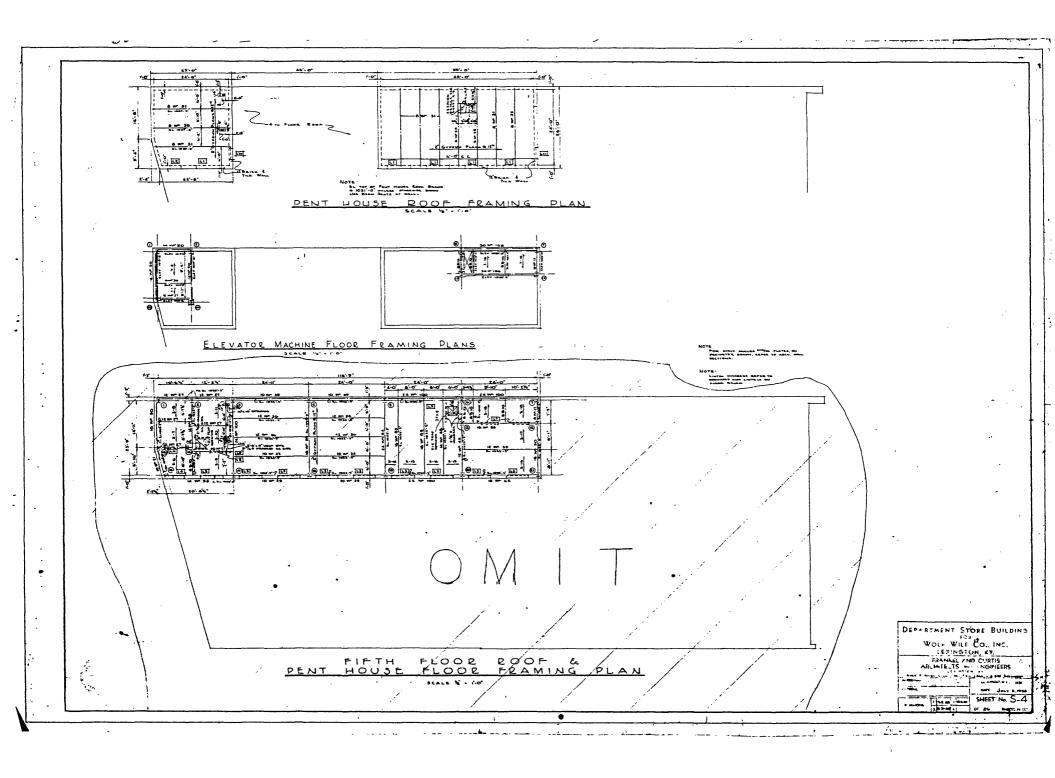
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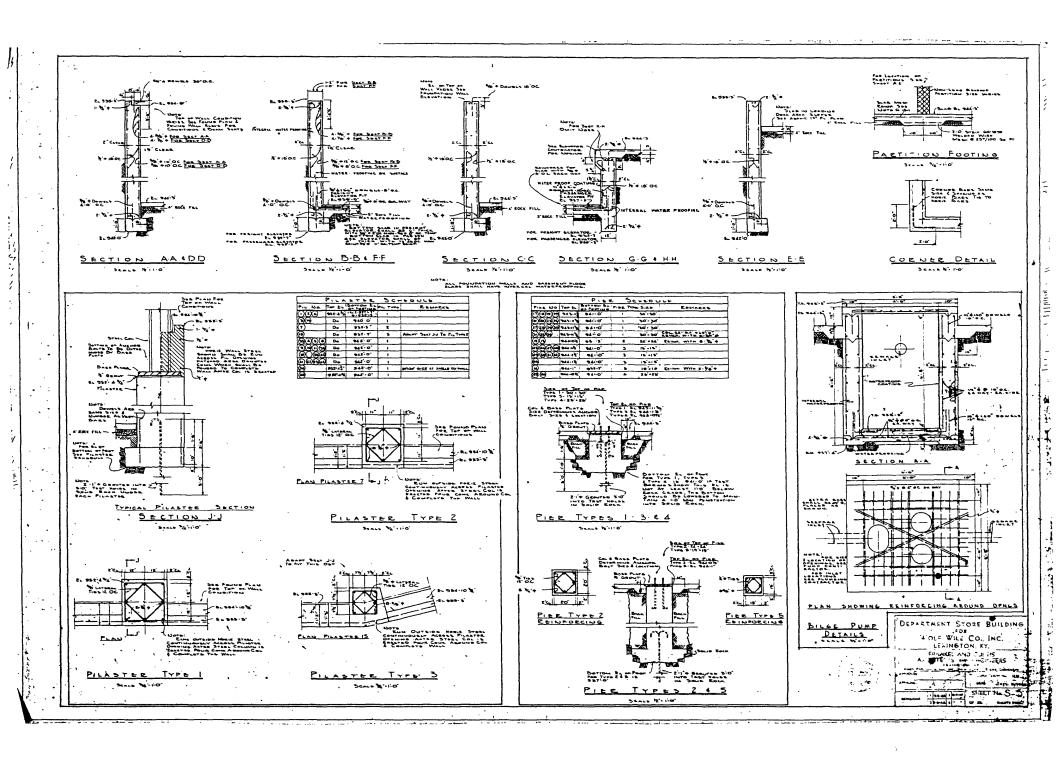
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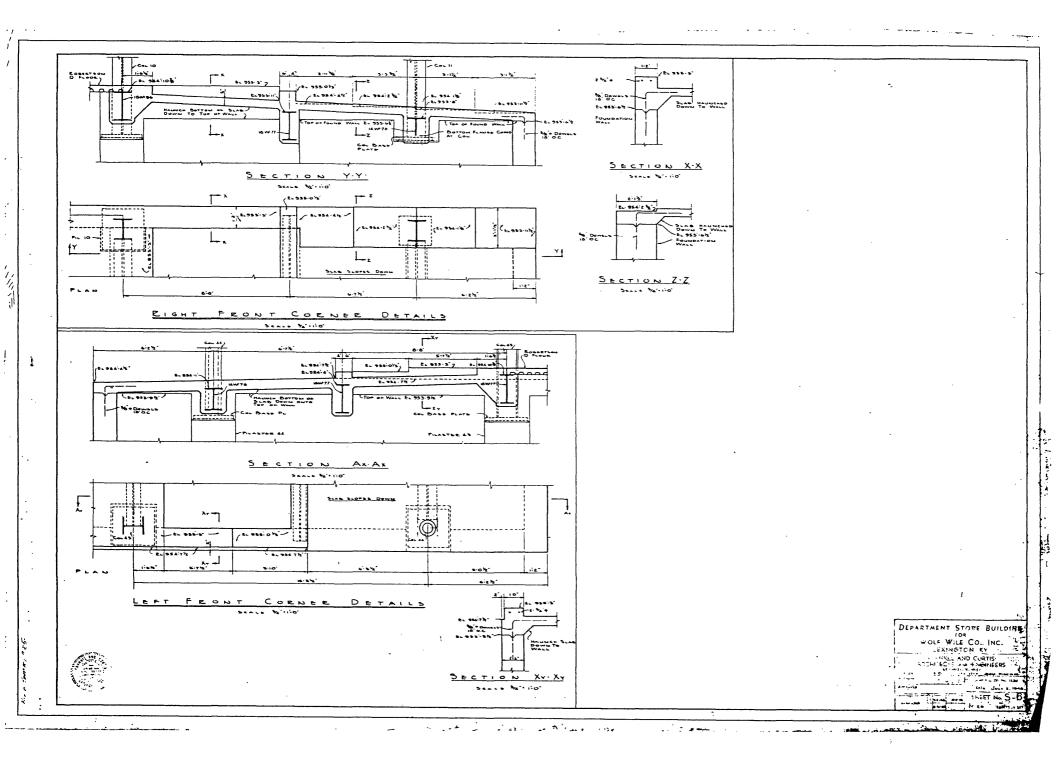


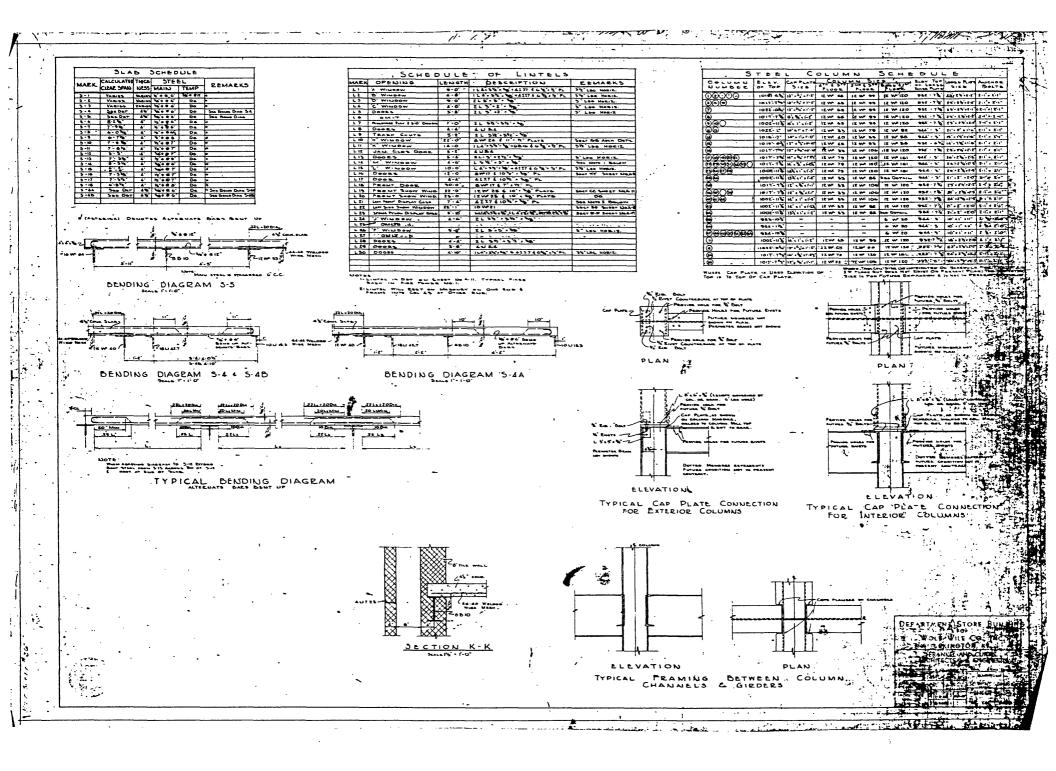


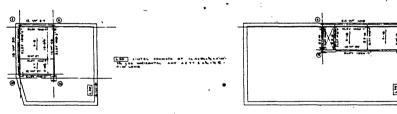












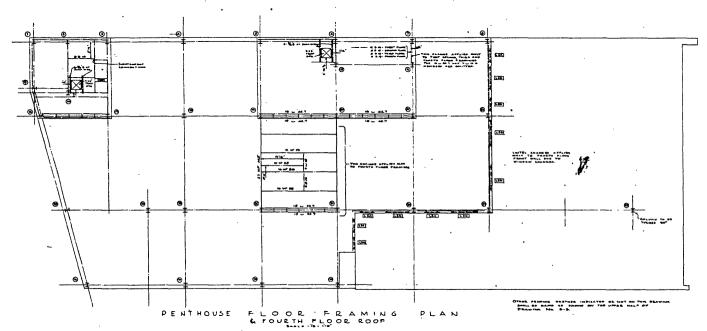
ELEVATOR MACHINE FLOOR FRAMING PLANS



ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS



ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR PASSENGER ELEVATORS



STREL COLUMN SCHEDULE										
		CAP PLATS	4600	1 - F . S . S . W		B	DIE D	ANCHEL Belts		
00	1010.9%	10 # 16 2 1-2	NE	NC	M.C	N.C.	N C.	M.C.		
990	10:7-75	of aborie	H.C.	. M.C.	NC.	MC.	A.C.	M.C.		
0	1022-0%	15 4 % Tries	N.C.	M-C.	NC	N.C.	Me.	M.C.		
O	1021-0%	9'44' 1 FE	NC.	N.C.	ALC.	N.C.	AC.	M.C.		
**	1022-1	14 21 160	ME.	N.C.	ALC.	ALC.	NC	M.C.		
9	1010-4	14 11 1000	N C.	N.C.	N.C.	M.C.	M.C.	NC.		
0				N.C.	AL	N.C.	N.C.	ALE.		
0	10 17- 76	B 1811-0	M.C.	ME.	M.C.	M.C.	M4.	M-E.		
00000	1017-74	M . W	M.C.	NE	44.	He	**	. M.C.		
•	-		N /	N.	20	253		Ne.		

ADDITION TO
PILASTER SCHEDULE ON DRG 5-5

-CHALGE ORDER DRAWING DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING
FOR
WOLF WILE CO., INC.
LEXINGTON, KY.
FRANKE AND CURTS
AROUTECTS AND ENGINESS

