NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

OMB No. 1024-0018
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received APR 12 1984
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant

and or common

2. Location

street & number 699 Ponce de Leon Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Atlanta N/A vicinity of

state Georgia code 013 county Fulton code 121

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	X unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	N/A in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	X other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Richard H. Bradfield, Bradfield Associates, Inc.

street & number 3025 Piedmont Road

city, town Atlanta N/A vicinity of state Georgia 30305

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Fulton County Courthouse

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Structures Field Survey: Atlanta, Fulton County [See Section 7.] has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1976 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date _____
X fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant, built in 1914-15, is a four-story, approximately rectangular industrial building with a partial basement. It is constructed of reinforced concrete. The front (north) and west sides are veneered with face brick and trimmed with terra cotta and colored tile; on the south and east elevations (the sides originally least visible from the city), the concrete frame is respectively faced with common brick and left exposed. Windows, which occupy much of the surface, are large, multi-paned, metal, industrial sash. The building's finished sides are detailed with brick pilasters between bays and a prominent terra-cotta stringcourse dividing the first from the upper floors. At the roofline, the building is finished with terra-cotta-faced segmental arches which spring from the brick pilasters at the fourth-floor level, spanning each bay. On the front facade, these arches support a denticulated, terra-cotta cornice. Brick parapets with centrally located terra-cotta name plates cap both the front and west sides. On the front facade, at the ground-floor level, are a centrally located main entrance, detailed with terra cotta and protected by a decorative metal canopy, and openings for large showroom windows, now boarded up with plywood. The roof is flat, and from it project three elevator towers, a water tower, a central, gabled clerestory that runs the length of the factory section, and a rooftop office or work area located in the southwest corner.

Throughout the interior, rows of concrete columns with mushroom-shaped capitals support the concrete slab floors. The interior space is divided into a showroom/office area at the north (front) end on the first floor and a factory area behind. Entrance from the street is directly into the large, centrally placed showroom which retains its original plaster walls. These are detailed with pilasters and a prominent cornice consisting of a decorative frieze and overscale dentil. Behind the showroom are some of the original walnut office partitions finished with glass transoms and dentil moldings. In this office area, column capitals, now hidden by a dropped acoustical-tile ceiling, are detailed with large cartouches. An elevator and a fine stairway finished with marble treads and risers, ceramic-tile landings, and a cast-iron railing are located to the west of the showroom. The finished stair suggests the possibility of additional office space on the second floor, although no evidence of historic office partitions exist today above the first floor. A more functional stair is located to the east of the showroom, and two additional stair/freight elevator shafts are located across from each other toward the rear of the building. The factory area was originally open in plan with a central lightwell/craneway that extended from the clerestory down to the second-floor level. Projecting galleries on the third and fourth floors allowed workers to handle materials in the craneway from many points in the factory. A heavily reinforced floor along the central portion of the second level supported a railbed and allowed rail cars to be brought into the building and directly under the craneway for unloading. The original boiler in the basement, what may have been coal chutes leading from the area of the railroad bed to the basement, original equipment for all three elevators, and an early dry-pipe sprinkler system are among the historic mechanical systems remaining

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in place. Major interior changes date from the 1940s, when the United States War Department acquired the building, partitioned much of the open space, and floored over the lightwell at both the third- and fourth-floor levels.

To the rear of the building are a group of interconnected, one-story, wood, metal and concrete-block sheds built over and around the railroad spur which came up to and, originally, into the building. Early in the factory's history, there were three discrete sheds with open sides and truss roofs extending from the rear of the building. These sheds may or may not exist amidst the present group of sheds, but the many alterations to the sheds after the 1930s, including extensions, infill between the earlier sheds, and enclosure with concrete block and metal siding, render the present sheds non-historic.

The building is located in a steep valley along Ponce de Leon Avenue, a major Atlanta thoroughfare. Immediately to its west, a railroad bed and overpass separate the factory from the Sears, Roebuck and Company building, another historic landmark. To the east, behind a row of one-story commercial structures, is a non-historic parking lot.

Boundary

The nominated property consists of the land occupied by the main factory building. Surrounding acreage associated with the building has lost its historic integrity and provides no information about the building's historic environment.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

On March 15, 1983, the National Register Programs Division of the National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, issued a preliminary certification of significance for this property.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	_X_ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	_X_ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	_X_ transportation
_X_ 1900–	___ communications	_X_ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1914-15 **Builder/Architect** John Graham

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant is historically significant in the areas of architecture, industry and transportation, and commerce. In terms of architecture, the building is significant as an outstanding example of early-twentieth-century commercial/industrial architecture in Atlanta and the Southeast. In terms of industry and transportation, the building is significant as one of the earliest automobile assembly plants in the Southeast and for representing the beginnings of the automobile industry in Atlanta. In terms of commerce, it is significant for serving as the headquarters of Ford's Southeastern operations from 1915 until 1942. These areas of significance support National Register eligibility under National Register criteria A, B and C.

Architecture

The Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant is an outstanding example in Atlanta of a modern early-twentieth-century industrial building. Its flat-slab, reinforced-concrete frame (exposed in some places on the exterior), its clerestory and lightwell, and large expanses of industrial sash windows are all important features which distinguish the building from earlier load-bearing-brick, late-Victorian industrial buildings. The structure's dual function as corporate branch headquarters/sales office and assembly plant, a typical combination of functions for an urban industrial building of the period, is reflected in both the exterior and the interior. Highly visible exterior areas are finished with face brick, a decorative cornice, and terra-cotta and tile detailing; the remainder is left unadorned. On the interior, the detailing of the office/showroom area, which includes decorative plasterwork, wood and glass office partitions, an elaborately detailed stairway, and column capitals finished with cartouches, contrasts with the spare, functional quality of the assembly areas behind. These have unadorned columns, large open spaces (now somewhat compromised by non-historic partitions), and a clerestory.

The plant is architecturally significant in terms of the role it played in the evolution of industrial facilities for the automobile industry. It was built by the Ford Motor Company as a result of Ford's pioneering decision to decentralize its production facilities. Between 1912 and the outbreak of World War I, the company constructed approximately thirty of these assembly plants around the country. The architect for nearly all these plants was John Graham, Sr. (1872-1955), an influential Seattle architect who, following the design of a plant for Ford in Seattle in 1913, moved to Detroit to become Ford's corporate architect.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 1 acre

Quadrangle name Northeast Atlanta, Georgia **Quadrangle scale** 1:24,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	74 4080	37 39 90 00	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the nominated property, outlined with a heavy black line on the enclosed Property/Sketch map, is described and justified in Section 7.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A	**code**	**county**	**code**
state	**code**	**county**	**code**

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Brooks, National Register Researcher

organization Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources **date** March 26, 1984

street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W. **telephone** (404) 656-2840

city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia 30334

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_X_ national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon

Elizabeth A. Lyon

title State Historic Preservation Officer **date** 4/2/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register **date** 5/10/84

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: **date**

Chief of Registration

According to John Graham and Company (the firm is still in existence), Graham was an early specialist in reinforced-concrete construction. This helps explain his prominent (although at this point almost totally unrecognized) role in the Ford factory construction program. Following his return to Seattle at the outbreak of World War I, he designed a number of that city's major commercial buildings of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Graham buildings were all multi-story, with reinforced-concrete frames designed to facilitate Ford's early practice of stationary assembly. Earlier, Albert Kahn-designed factory buildings at Ford's main plant in Highland Park, Michigan, served as partial models. Unfortunately, due to the rapid changes in construction technology in the fast-developing automobile industry, the plants were obsolete before many of them had been completed. The 1913 introduction by Ford of the moving assembly line made one-story plants far more efficient and desirable. Consequently, in the 1920s, Ford embarked on a second major period of construction, remodeling the earlier buildings where possible (as at Atlanta), but in most cases constructing entirely new one-story, steel-frame facilities. Albert Kahn was in charge of this work.

The Atlanta Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant stands as an example of Ford's first extensive period of factory-building and as an example of a quickly outmoded yet, for its time, highly progressive form of factory construction. It is one of three extant Ford assembly plants in the South from this early period of expansion. (The others are located in Houston and Dallas.) It is one of the outstanding examples of early-twentieth-century industrial architecture in Georgia and the Southeast.

Industry and Transportation

The Ford plant is significant as the location of one of Atlanta's first large-scale heavy industries. It documents both the city's early-twentieth-century emergence as a regional business and industrial center and the Ford Company's pioneering decision to decentralize its production facilities. The plant was one of the earliest automobile production facilities in the Southeast and represents the beginnings of the automobile industry in Atlanta.

With the extraordinary success of the Model T, first introduced in 1908, and the immediate need to expand production facilities, Ford made the then-radical decision to build assembly plants at strategic points around the country. This was primarily an economic decision, for the decentralization resulted in lowered freight rates and more efficient distribution of finished cars. Ford's policy was precendent-setting in the automobile industry, although no other companies had the necessary volume of production to follow suit with regionalized production until the 1920s. (A 1928 Chevrolet assembly plant in Atlanta is an example of this

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continued industry decentralization.) At the Ponce de Leon Ford plant, Model T's (1915-1927), Model A's (1927-1932) and V-8's (1932-1937) were assembled. A modern one-story assembly plant constructed in nearby Hapeville in 1946-47 continued Ford's industrial presence in Atlanta.

Commerce

In terms of commerce, the building is significant for providing an early and important example in Atlanta of the twentieth-century business practice developed by companies with national markets of regionalization. It served as the headquarters of Ford Motor Company's Southeastern operations from 1915 to 1942 and during that time was a major commercial presence in Atlanta. In 1907, four years after the company was founded, Ford opened its first small sales office in Atlanta in a converted harness shop. In 1909, because of the high volume of sales in the city, Atlanta was selected as a regional branch. In 1914, Ford made the decision to concentrate its sales, service, administration, assembly, and shipping operations for four Southern states in Atlanta, and construction was begun on the Ponce de Leon building. At the height of its operation in this building, Ford sold, on an annual average, 22,000 vehicles. In 1942, the building was sold to the War Department for use as an Army Air Force Storage Depot and Offices of the Third Air Service Area Command. Later it was used as an induction center. Presently, plans call for its reuse as rental apartments and shops.

Atlanta Journal. "Ford Company to Erect Plant by Ponce de Leon," January 11, 1914, p. 5.

Ford Motor Company. "History of Ford Motor Company in Atlanta," news release on file at Atlanta Historical Society, June, 1953.

Harris, Douglas. "Nomination to National Historic Register: Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant, Atlanta, Georgia," on file at State Historic Preservation Office, Atlanta, n.d.

Hildebrand, Grant. Designing for Industry: The Architecture of Albert Kahn. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Johannson, Eric. National Register nomination, "Ford Motor Company Cleveland Plant," April, 1975.

John Graham and Company. The First 80 Years. Seattle, Washington, n.d.

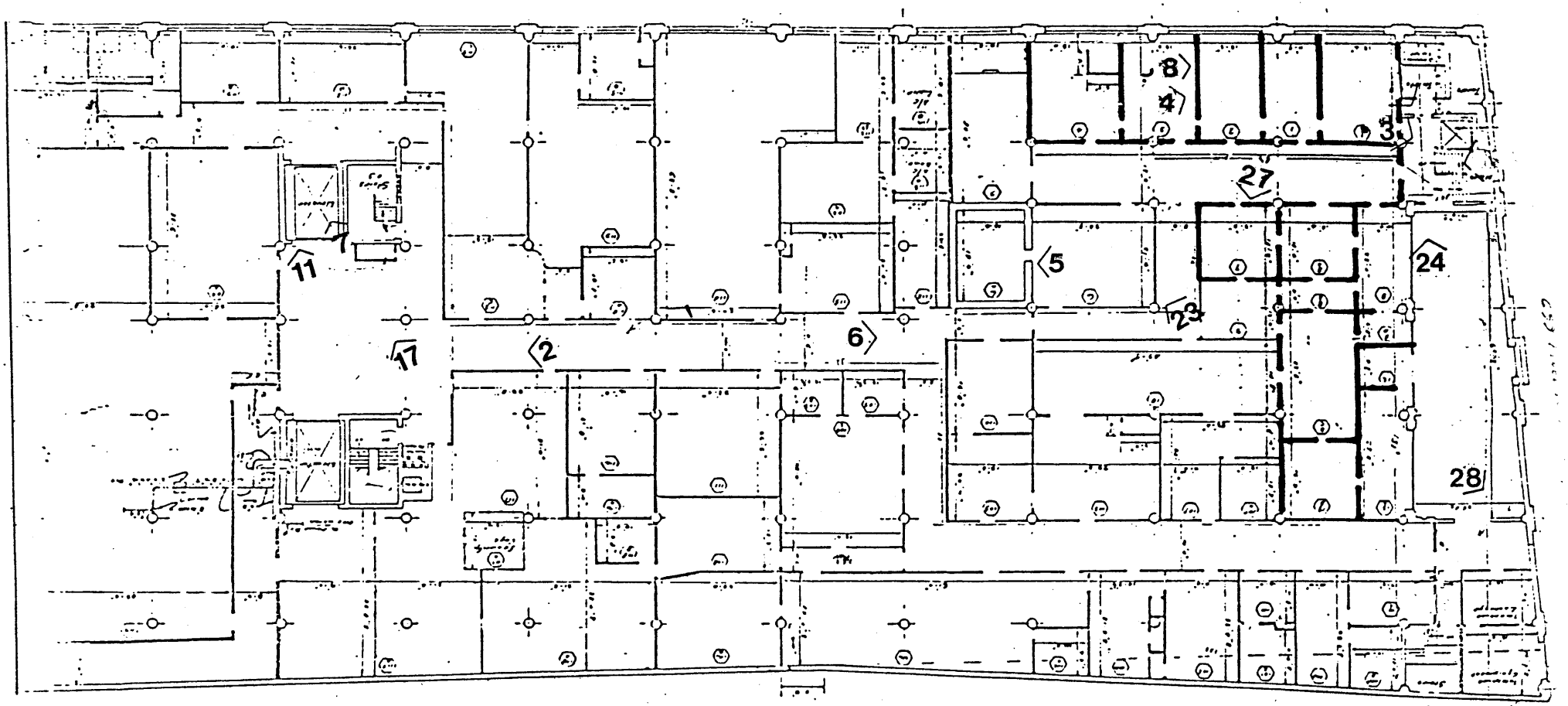
Nevins, Alan. Ford: Expansion and Challenge. New York: Charles Scribner, 1957.

Nevins, Alan. Ford: The Times, the Man, the Company. New York: Charles Scribner, 1954.

Photocopies of photographs and narrative information from the Ford Archives, Dearborn, Michigan.

Photocopies of photographs and narrative information from John Graham and Company, Seattle, Washington.

Wilson, Dagenhart and Johnson. "Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant: An Historic Preservation Factory Renovation," October, 1982. On file at State Historic Preservation Office, Atlanta.

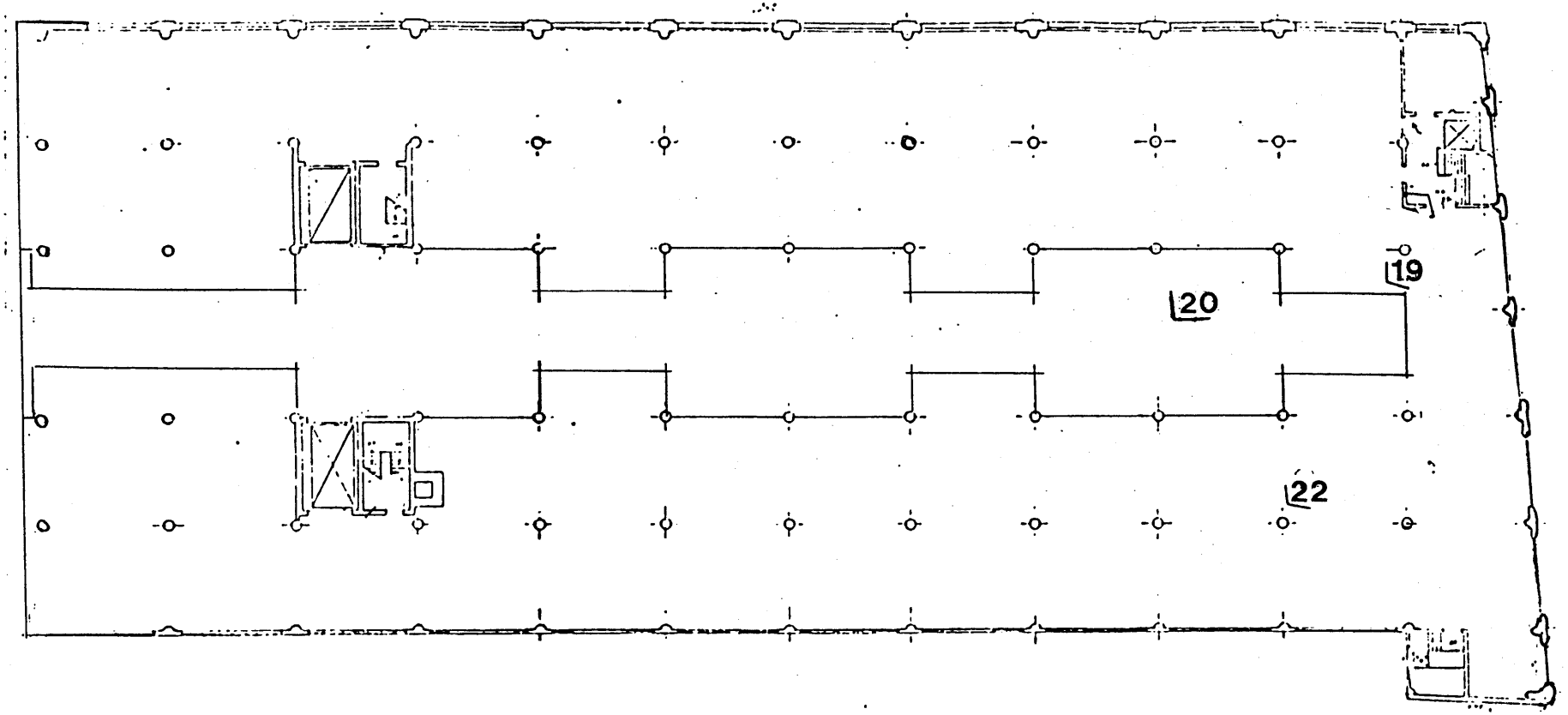


FORD MOTOR COMPANY ASSEMBLY PLANT
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 1":30' (approximate)
North: ↘

FIRST FLOOR

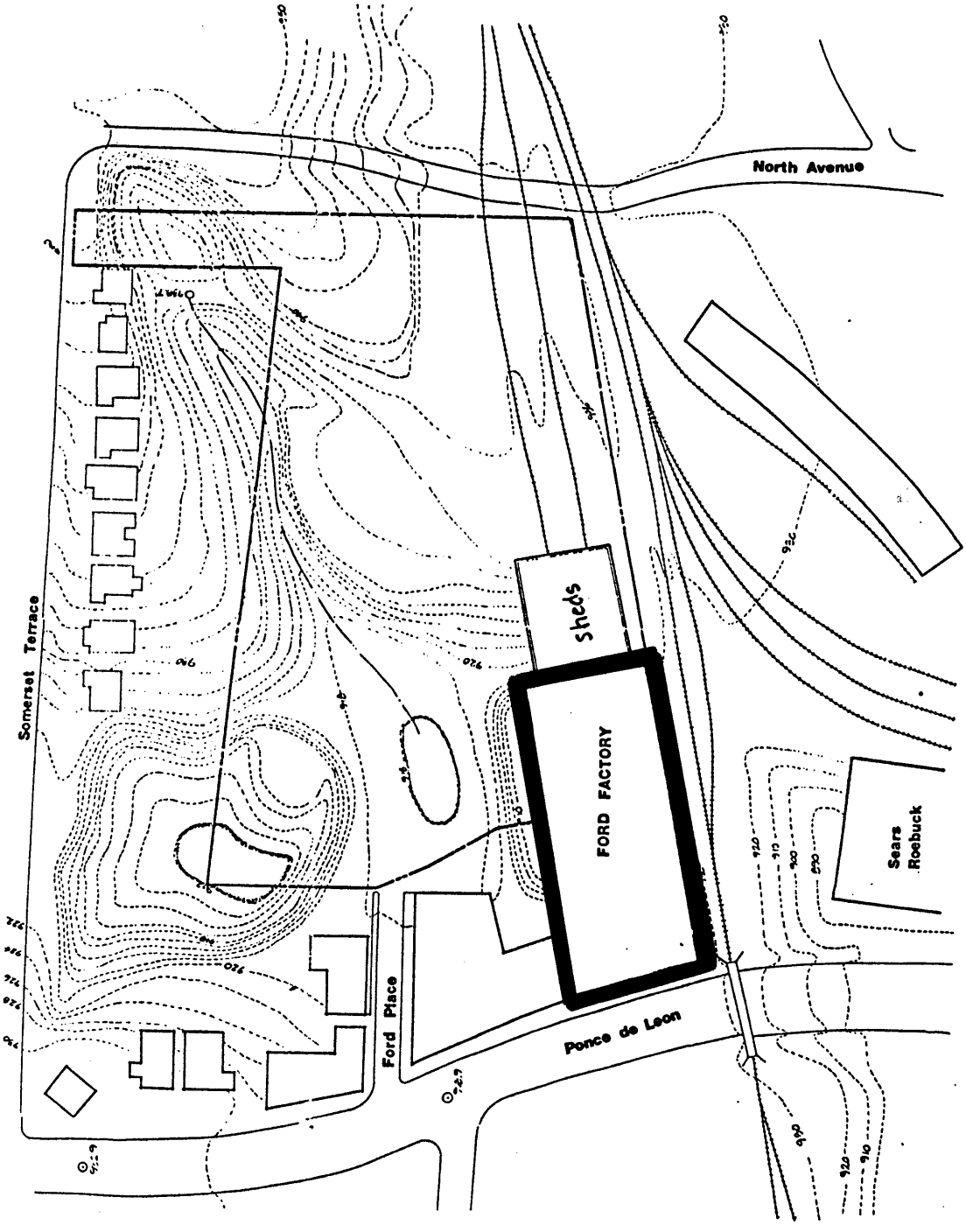


FORD MOTOR COMPANY ASSEMPLY PLANT
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

Scale: 1':30' (approximate)
North: →

THIRD FLOOR



FORD MOTOR COMPANY ASSEMBLY PLANT
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

PROPERTY/SKETCH MAP

Scale: 1":150' (approximate)
North: ↓
Property Boundary: ▬▬▬