

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 14001171

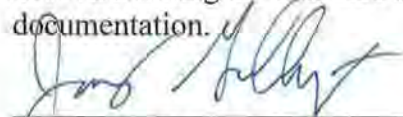
Date Listed: 1/20/2015

Property Name: Rault Center

County: Orleans

State: LA

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

1-20-2015

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5: Category of Property

The category of this property is hereby changed to **Building**

The Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



1171

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: The Rault Center
Other Names/Site Number: n/a
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

2. Location

Street & Number: 1111 Gravier Street
City or town: New Orleans State: LA County: Orleans
Not for Publication: Vicinity: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, 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 level(s) of significance:
 national state local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Pam Breaux
Signature of certifying official/Title: Pam Breaux, State Historic Preservation Officer **Date:** 12/1/14
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date:**
Title: **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park 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: _____

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

1-20-2015

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <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 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Non-contributing | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| | | Buildings |
| 1 | | Sites |
| | | Structures |
| | | Objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Commerce Trade/business; Domestic/multiple dwelling; Social/clubhouse; Domestic/hotel; and Commerce/restaurant

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Vacant/Not in Use; Work in Progress

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.): Modern Movement; New Formalism; Other

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: concrete; stone; glass; stucco

roof: synthetic

other: n/a

Summary Paragraph

The Rault Center, originally named the Continental Center Building based on plans filed in 1965 with the City of New Orleans, consists of a 16-story high-rise structure with a rooftop penthouse located at the northwest corner of Gravier Street and South Rampart Street in the Central Business District of New Orleans, bearing the municipal address of 1111 Gravier Street. The building is not within the boundaries of the Lower Central Business District National Register District and was left out of the most recent update to the district done in 2006. The building has a gross building area of 113,956 square feet. The building was built of steel and reinforced concrete with the floors being poured in place concrete of about 4 inches thick. The exterior walls were mostly ¼ inch plate glass separated by concrete spandrels and uprights. Exterior features were a combination of aluminum and concrete panels, stucco, plate glass, marble veneer, and elements of porcelain enamel. The building was designed to reflect the Mid Century Modern aesthetics including the use of large pieces of plate glass alternating with aluminum and concrete panels to create distinct vertical elements on its elevations. The Rault Center suffered a tragic fire in 1972, severely damaging the building both through fire damage and subsequent water damage. Renovations of the building removed much of the original material, but today, the building still presents itself as a tall, concrete frame building with some other exterior remnants from the building's 1972 fire remaining to display sufficient integrity to convey the building's significance in changing state and local fire safety laws and remains eligible for the National Register.

Narrative Description

Designed by Robert Lee Hall & Associates, the building was constructed between 1965 and 1967, opening on September 8, 1967, and is an example of Mid-Century Modern (Modern Movement) architecture. It is situated on a concrete foundation and incorporates a poured in place concrete frame structure. The superstructure framing consists of structural reinforced concrete elements. The original plans indicate exterior elements of glass, porcelain enamel, marble, concrete block, stucco and rubbed concrete. Windows on floors 2-15 were glass in aluminum sash with in-swinging top sections with the 1st floor having 4' solar grey windows and the 16th floors having sliding 4' solar grey glass doors. With the exception of the 1st and 2nd floors, the interior of the building is completely open and exposed to the elements, having been vacant for many years. Research indicates that the building has been vacant since 1984.¹ In recent years any remaining windows (some of which have been retained and stored within the building and in warehouses) as well as other exterior elements were removed for fear of falling to the street below.

Structural Description: At each floor structural beams exist in both the north-south and the east-west directions in the interior of the building with a spandrel beam surrounding the perimeter of the building. A structural beam surrounds the elevator and stairwell core on each floor.

The second through sixteenth floor system appears to consist of a 3" slab pour monolithically with regularly spaced reinforced concrete floor joists with the joists running in an east-west direction tying into band beams or

¹ Lettice Stuart. "Rault building goes on market for \$3 million". *The Times-Picayune/States Item* 20 September 1986 pg. 5.

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girder beams at each grid line or at beams located around the elevator cores and stairwell cores. Both square and rectangular reinforced concrete columns are present in the structure. Sizes of the columns vary and some are embedded in the stair core walls, but in general the column sizes range from 24"x24 to 32"x32" square and 24"x32" and 24"x40" rectangular.

On floors fourteen through sixteen it appears that at some point in the past, probably following the fire in 1972, structural steel retrofits or strengthening to the existing concrete structure were done. The only major damage appears on the sixteen floor ceiling. The ceiling of this area, or bottom of seventeen floor, or roof top, indicates the fire damage and the existence of reinforcement steel beams added.

The roof top or seventeenth level consists of a structural steel framed penthouse structure with tube steel columns and steel beams and girders supporting a metal deck. The penthouse structure does not encompass the entire footprint of the floor level and the remaining portion is a "flat roof" with several heavily deteriorated mechanical support beams for former mechanical equipment.

According to an article from the *Times-Picayune* in June of 1974² Elmer Triche, chief engineer for the Louisiana Rating and Fire Prevention Bureau at the time, stated that:

"Although few are fully sprinklered, buildings that were built before 1950 are by construction technique and materials alone- far safer than their high-rise sisters constructed since... The recently released report of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control says: 'The modern urban environment imparts to people a false sense of security about fire. ... Those who think only of a buildings basic structure (not its contents) are satisfied, mistakenly that the materials – concrete, steel, glass, aluminum are indestructible by fire. ... That assumption is incorrect.'"

Triche also cited the exterior or design of modern buildings as a definite hazard:

"Windows are often nothing but glass walls extending from floor to ceiling with no real outside barrier separating floor from floor to thwart the exterior rise of fire. The Rault Center fire actually climbed from one floor to another along the outside."³

Exterior

Gravier Street Elevation (See Photo 1 and Figure 1):

The façade, facing onto Gravier Street, featured five large bays, each of which is divided into four sections by vertical aluminum mullions and featured ¼" solar grey glass windows on the first two levels and the 16th floor. The bays themselves are divided by marble veneer panels on the first two floors with aluminum and concrete panels extending from there the full height of the building. The windows were divided into twelve panes with the horizontal spandrel center row of windows being about a third of the height of the upper and lower windows. The central bay, where the main entrance is, featured four sets of double glass doors topped by an eight light "transom" of which the bottom row of windows is about 1/8 the size of the upper glass panels. On the side of this main entrance are tall decorative marble panels (see Photos 4 and 5). A semi-circular driveway provided drop-off capabilities to the front entrance (See Exterior Sketch Map). The third through fifteenth floors featured the same five bays as the first floor with four windows each. Each bay had four enamel panels at the bottom, with an aluminum window above, topped by another enamel panel. The windows were each separated from one another by vertical aluminum panels. The bottom portion of each window was inoperable and the upper portion swung inward. The sixteenth floor, also divided into five large bays with four sections each had four sliding center glass panels in each bay topped by spandrel panels and a porcelain enamel capping and face at the top. The 17th floor was concrete block and aluminum panels and was even more simply detailed than the rest of the building.

² Vincent Lee. "Better Fire Safety Laws Eyed in Legislature". The Times Picayune (New Orleans, LA) 16 June 1974. Section 3, pg. 6.

³ Ibid.

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The current appearance has not changed extensively from this original design. The windows have been removed as have the dividing vertical aluminum and or marble panels as they had begun to fall off of the building. The first and second floor windows have been boarded up with many glass panels remaining behind. The sixteenth floor appears to have been changed at some point in time to fixed in place glass panels of the same size as the original sliding doors; however, now it appears that only three of the five sections of aluminum frames remain with no glass. Only some steel and metal framing of the 17th floor remains.

Rampart Street Elevation (See Photo 1):

The Rampart Street elevation mimics the design and materials of the main façade, but instead of five main bays, it was designed with only three main bays divided into three glass sections each. There are no entrances on this elevation so all three bays on the ground floor match the four flanking bays of the façade. The second through fifteenth floors match those of the Gravier façade as does the sixteenth; however, the three main bays on the 16th floor had a central single glass sliding door. Again, this elevation of the 17th floor is very simply detailed and had one set of double doors leading to roof access. The current appearance is similar to that of the Gravier Street elevation although no glass or aluminum framing remains on the 16th floor.

Northwest Elevation:

The northwest elevation faces onto a neighboring building, but there is a gap between the buildings so it is essentially a mirror image of the Rampart Street elevation (unlike other buildings built right next to neighboring buildings, it was not directly attached and thus has windows on all floors, except the first and second). The main difference between this elevation and the Rampart Street elevation is on the first two levels where the three main bays were not filled in with glass panels, but rather were all stucco and rubbed concrete as this elevation was not visible from the street. There was a small opening on the far left that was built of concrete block and contained a set of double exit doors.

The current appearance is similar to that of the Gravier and S. Rampart Street elevations although the stucco and rubbed concrete remain on the 1st and 2nd floors with essentially no glass or aluminum framing remaining on the upper floors.

Northeast (rear) Elevation (See Photos 2-3):

This elevation became one of the most famous elevations on the building as this is the location of the windows from which the five women who were trapped in the beauty salon leapt to their deaths. Two survived the jump with one later succumbing to here injuries shortly after. This elevation does not directly mirror the main facade, but is still divided into five main sections. Floors 1-4 were not filled in with glass panels, but rather were masonry stucco with vertical unfinished concrete panels as this elevation was not visible from the street. The central section was composed of rubbed concrete around its edges and stucco in the middle from the ground floor up to the 17th floor. Flanking this central bay on the fifth through fifteenth floors were two sections on each side, the outermost of four windows and the innermost of three windows each. The same design and materials was used in each of these sections as on the other elevations. The sixteenth floor on this elevation matches the other elevations at this level with ¼" solar glass panels in aluminum frame and was similar to its lower elevation in that it had four windows in the outermost bay and three windows on the innermost bay with a double sliding glass door in the four bay type and a single sliding glass door in the 3 bay type. The 17th floor was concrete block and aluminum panels and was of simple detail from the rest of the building.

The current appearance is similar to that of the other elevations with the stucco and rubbed concrete remaining on the lower levels and in the central bay the height of the building with essentially no glass or aluminum framing remaining on the upper floors. This elevation does retain the largest number of original windows still in place. It appears that the rooftop directly above the area where the major fire damage occurred on the 15 and 16th floors has been reinforced with additional concrete and steel beams thus the building is no longer symmetrical at this level but forms a slight elongated horizontal "L" shape, with a slight lower elevation on the east side.

Interior

The Rault Center

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At the time of its opening, The Mobile Oil Corporation occupied the first 8 floors and Rault Petroleum was also within the building. Floors nine through fourteen were apartments with the beauty salon, ski-chalet room, and various other rooms on the fifteenth floor. The sixteenth floor was the Lamplighter restaurant/lounge and there was a 21' x 32' swimming pool with a depth of 3-4', surrounded by 2 1/2" light weight concrete decking. The seventeenth floor was the gymnasium and equipment rooms. A central corridor extended the length of the building on each floor with three passenger elevators and two stairwells located near the center of the building. "The building was not equipped with automatic sprinklers or a fire alarm system. There were two standpipes, one at each stair tower with a hose rack installed at each floor level in the elevator lobby." (see Photo 27 for example of the hose pipe case) A one-bedroom apartment with wall-to-wall carpeting could be had for a mere \$137 per month. Twelve three-bedroom Penthouse Salon Suites with "automatic kitchens" rented for \$197 per month. The kitchens were furnished with refrigerator/freezers, ice makers, dish washers, garbage disposals, and built-in Norge oven/ranges. Utilities were included, maid and room service was available, and a doorman was on duty 24/7 in the security guarded building.⁴

The entrance on Gravier Street was through four sets of glass doors with an aluminum threshold. Upon entering, the lobby which was open to the second floor, elevator lobby, and main corridors were finished with terrazzo floors, 8" concrete block and walnut plywood walls (see Photo 8). To the right of the lobby were two finished commercial areas (see Photos 11-14) with acoustical tile ceilings, paneling, and carpet. To the left of the elevators was one commercial space unfinished at the time of construction. Restrooms were located just outside the two commercial spaces on the left. Today what remains is some of the terrazzo flooring, 8" concrete block and painted wood paneling.

The second floor also had terrazzo floors in the corridor with carpeting in the office areas to the left and right of the elevator lobby. The second floor lobby area was open to below with an aluminum rail overlooking to the first floor. Walls were painted gypsum board with acoustical tile ceilings. After the fire in 1972, the building was renovated for hotel use and the space to the left of the lobby had brick and glass walls and a brick fireplace installed (see Photos 16-18). Today, some of the terrazzo and the brick and some glass remains, although the glass is currently boarded up.

Floors 3-8 were similar to the second floor except they did not overlook the floors below. Today, most of the features are gone, exposed to the elements, with only some terrazzo and bathroom tile remaining, assumed to be from the renovation to a hotel (see Photos 19-21, 23-27, 32-35).

Floors 9-14 were the location of the residential apartments, again with a terrazzo floor at the elevator lobby area. Ceiling heights were ±8" with gypsum board ceilings and walls. Flooring was a combination of vinyl and ceramic tile and carpeting. Today, almost all of these features are gone, exposed to the elements, with only some terrazzo and bathroom tile remaining, assumed to be from the renovation to a hotel.

On the fifteenth floor were a few apartments and commercial space including the Ski Chalet. According to the article in *Fire Journal-May 1973*.⁵

"The Ski Chalet, where the fire started, was paneled on three sides with one-by-12-inch wood boards furred out approximately 1/2-inch from 1/2-inch gypsum board. The ceiling was covered with the same boards. The fourth wall was made up of glass windows separated by concrete uprights. The floor covering was carpeting with a rubber underlayer. The two decorative panel doors in the wall between the Chalet and the central corridor were about three feet apart."

Today, nothing remains of this floor except the charred concrete and reinforced steel beams (see Photos 33-35).

⁴ Today in New Orleans History. 29 November 1972.

⁵ Laurence D. Waltrous. "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans". *Fire Journal* May 1973.

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The 16th floor and rooftop were occupied with the Roof Top Club, a members-only women and men's club featuring the Old Lamplighter's restaurant/lounge, a roof-top pool and sun-deck, a putting green, a spa for women, and a health club for men. These areas are also open and exposed to the elements.

A year and a half after the fire, the building was converted into a 201 room hotel originally called the Dome Stadium Hotel, later renamed the Rault Hotel. By 1975, it became the Holiday Inn Superdome. In the 1980's, the building was converted to apartments and time shares and it was eventually offered for auction in 1984, 1986, and 1988.³ The building was foreclosed on in 1984 by Life and Casualty Insurance Company when Joseph Rault Jr. and Estelle Fort and Yvonne Berges defaulted on a \$5.5 million dollar loan.⁶ Throughout that time period, the Old Lamplighter Club remained open. The property became vacant in 1984 and the condition began to deteriorate to the point of its currently exposed form.

Integrity

"Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant." For a building like the Rault Center, which is significant for a tragic event that led to changes in local and state fire safety laws, as well as some impact on Federal Fire Safety laws, the building's current physical integrity is not as important as if the building were significant under another criterion such as architecture. Had the building lost any of the floors that were tied to the fire, its integrity would be significantly impacted. However, the building still retains all of its original floors, including the top three floors, which were most impacted by the fire in 1972 and retains a modicum of exterior integrity.

In applying the seven aspects of integrity to the Rault Center Building:

- **Location** is intact. The building is in its original location.
- **Design, Materials, and Workmanship:** The building was designed to reflect the Mid Century Modern aesthetics including the use of large pieces of plate glass alternating with aluminum and rubbed concrete panels to create distinct vertical elements on its elevations. As applied to the exterior of the building, today only the concrete panels remain. In recent years any remaining glass windows or loose materials were removed for fear of falling to the street below. Many of the original windows are stored within the building and in warehouses and are intended to be reused, if possible. The interior from the third floor up is basically open space. Of the first floor interior, what remains of the original construction appears to be some of the terrazzo flooring, 8" concrete block and wood walls. On the second floor some of the original terrazzo remains with elements of brick walls and some glass windows believed to have been completed in the 1973 renovation. The exterior of this building retains more integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, while the interior does not due to the fire and subsequent renovations. Despite the loss of interior integrity, guidance from the National Park Service has stated that the current physical integrity does not matter as much overall because it still projects itself as a tall, concrete frame building with a measure of exterior integrity.
- **Setting** is intact. At the time of construction, the Rault Center was located in the New Orleans' financial and business downtown, surrounded by commercial buildings mostly dating to the pre-war years with some of more modern architecture. Today, that setting is largely intact. The surrounding area remains the city's financial and business downtown.
- **Feeling** is intact. Feeling relates to the ability of the building to be an expression of its time period. Although some exterior elements have been removed, the building's exterior continues to reflect the modern era of the 1960's when it was built.
- **Association** is also intact. Association is defined as the direct link between the event and the property. Many of the original fire alarms remain (see Photos 28-31) which consists of a circular metal wall fixture with a metal door and crank. Above this is a metal grid for sound. These fixtures are dated January 1967. Also, some of the original fire hose boxes remain. A distinct burn pattern can be seen on the 15th floor where the fire

⁶ "J.N.W.Otto, Druggist and Apothecary". Preservation in Print 22 February 2009.

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originated. Other original details remain helping the building to retain its look from its date of construction and from the year of the fire, 1972.

While the Rault Center has suffered damage from its tragic 1972 fire and subsequent renovations, it still stands today as a tall, concrete frame Mid Century Modern building that maintains enough exterior integrity to look as it did in 1972. The building itself is still recognizable to many New Orleanians as the site of a fire whose aftermath helped to change state and local fire safety laws and is eligible for listing on the National Register.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

| | | |
|----------|----------|--|
| X | A | Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. |
| | B | Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. |
| | 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 distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction. |
| | D | Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history |

Criteria Considerations:

| | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| | A | Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes |
| | B | Removed from its original location |
| | C | A birthplace or grave |
| | D | A cemetery |
| | E | A reconstructed building, object, or structure |
| | F | A commemorative property |
| X | G | Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years |

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Politics/Government

Period of Significance: 1972

Significant Dates: November 29, 1972

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Robert Lee Hall & Associates

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance is 1972, the year of the fire that occurred at the site and whose aftermath changed state and local fire safety laws.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): The Rault Center is less than 50 years old meeting Criteria Consideration G. However, the fire that occurred on November 29, 1972 was the

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catalyst for changes in the State law requiring all high-rise buildings to be sprinklered and qualifies as exceptional significance.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Rault Center, a 16-story hi-rise structure located in the Central Business District of New Orleans, is eligible for listing at the local and state level under Criterion A: History, in the area of Politics/Government. The building falls under Criteria Consideration G as it was constructed in 1967 and is less than 50 years old. However, its significance as a site that was a catalyst in changing local and state fire safety laws following a tragic 1972 fire qualifies as exceptional significance. Prior to the fire, the building was the first mixed use high rise building in downtown New Orleans with offices, residential apartments, and the top three floors occupied by the Roof Top Club, a members-only women and men's club featuring the Old Lamplighter's restaurant/lounge, a roof-top pool and sun-deck, a putting green, a spa for women, and a health club for men. The period of significance for the building is 1972, the year of the fire for which it is significant.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The northwest corner of S. Rampart and Gravier Streets was previously the location of a gas station in the mid 1940's.⁷ In 1965, Joseph Rault, Jr. purchased the site and plans were drawn for the Continental Center Building, later called the Rault Center, the first mixed use commercial/residential high-rise in New Orleans.⁸ The building reportedly cost \$3.5 million dollars to construct and officially opened on September 8, 1967.⁹

The Rault Center became a well-known name, for tragic reasons, on Wednesday, November 29, 1972, after a tragic fire at the building was televised live and showed five people leaping from the 15th floor to a building roof below. Four of these jumpers, all women from the hair salon on the 15th floor, perished. The fifth survived, but with many serious injuries. Three persons were trapped in the elevator, one of which perished in the building from smoke inhalation, and another died a short time after. The news coverage of the fire became part of a local, state, and national debate for fire prevention and control. At the time of the fire, there were no uniform standards for fire prevention on a local, state or national level.

Forty years later, in an interview on November 7, 2012 with Fox 8, Meg Gatto spoke with Mrs. Natalie Smith, the only woman to survive the jump from the Rault Center fire. The article is titled "Fox 8 Exclusive: Survivor of Rault Center fire speaks, 40 years later". Meg Gatto wrote "*The Rault Center fire was a terrible tragedy, but some good did come out of it. Lawmakers required all high rise buildings to install sprinkler systems after the fire. 'I think it's great. It makes me secure,' Smith commented.*"¹⁰

The Rault Center Fire

According to an article in *Fire Journal-May 1973*,¹¹ and the *Rault Center Fire Investigation Report- September 11, 1973*¹² from the Louisiana Legislative Council, the tragic fire that occurred on November 29, 1972, was actually the second fire to occur that day. The first one had happened at 7:59 am and was a small fire on the 16th floor in an employee changing room. The fire was extinguished by employees. The tragic fire began later that day when the first alarm was received at 1:28 pm for a fire on the 15th floor in a room named the Ski-Chalet room, a meeting room. The fire broke through the glass on the Gravier Street side and spread to the 16th floor (Lamplighter Club) completely destroying it (see Figure 6). The fire on the 15th floor spread into the hallway and trapped five women in the beauty salon. By 1:35 pm, the fire was at four alarms. Firefighters worked diligently to reach the women trapped in the beauty salon, but were unable to reach them on the interior because of heavy fire and smoke. An attempt on the exterior was made when a ladder was extended from an adjoining 8 story building; however, it only reached the 13th floor. Several unsuccessful attempts were

⁷ "J.N.W.Otto, Druggist and Apothecary". Preservation in Print 22 February 2009.

⁸ Today in New Orleans History. 29 November 1972.

⁹ Stuart, Lettice. "Rault building goes on market for \$3 million". *The Times-Picayune/States Item* 20 September 1986, Page 5.

¹⁰ Meg Gatto. "Fox 8 Exclusive: Suvivor of Rault Center fire speaks, 40 years later". 7 November 2012.

¹¹ Laurence D. Waltrous. "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans". *Fire Journal* May 1973.

¹² Rault Center Fire Investigation Report. 11 September 1973.

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made to shoot a rope into a window were the women were. At the same time three people were trapped in the elevator and eight people were on the rooftop. A helicopter was able to rescue those people on the roof while firefighters reached the three in the elevator. One of these people had died of smoke inhalation and the other two were transported to the hospital where one later died.

Between 1:49 pm and 1:52 pm, the helicopter had made unsuccessful attempts to use a drop line, the Coast Guard was approaching with a larger helicopter, and on the interior, firefighters were making slow progress toward the women; however, the women were reportedly hanging out of the window. At 1:53 pm a radio report from the rooftop of the adjoining eight story building announced that all five women had jumped. Three of the women died instantly, one two weeks later, and the other, Mrs. Natalie Smith, survived. By 3:15 pm, the fire was under control. The damage was extensive in that half of the 15th floor was burned out and the 16th and 17th floors were destroyed. It is believed that combustible materials in the restaurant on the 16th floor aided in the spread of the fire as well as extensive wood paneling, which was highly varnished and produces a gas when burned. Arson was ultimately believed to have been the cause and to this day no one has been charged.¹³ Immediately following the tragic fire there was an outcry on a local, state, and even federal level for an investigation into the cause of the fire, the response of the fire department, and the existing fire codes for high-rise structures.

The day after the fire, Governor Edwin Edwards along with Joseph Rault, Jr., and Fire Marshal Raymond Oliver toured the structure and stated, "I do not know whether updating or changing the state fire code is required, but I do not want to leave any stone unturned in determining this."¹⁴ "Edwards ordered State Fire Marshal Raymond Oliver of New Orleans, who was along for the tour, to make a study of possible revisions to fire regulations for tall buildings. Oliver said he has long advocated sprinkler systems in any building more than five or six stories high."¹⁵ The Governor called for a meeting to be held in Oliver's Office and invited city officials, fire officials, and safety inspectors to discuss the possibility of new state legislation on fire prevention.¹⁶

In the wake of the fire, The New Orleans Fire Fighters Association issued a five-point proposal for the city's fire protection. The proposal included:

1. Proper manpower and equipment for the fire department
2. An adequate training budget
3. Adoption of necessary fire and building codes for the city
4. Vigorous enforcement of those codes "on an impartial basis"
5. Automatic sprinkler protection, especially for all high-rise buildings.¹⁷

Mayor Moon Landrieu said "he hopes the experts who are looking into the fire can find some way to develop new fire prevention and warning systems, but he would not predict what changes might be made in the city or state fire or building codes."¹⁸

Reportedly, at the time that the Rault Center was built, it met all local, state, and national building codes and fire requirements. Joseph Rault, Jr., in an interview for the *Times Picayune* said, "At the time this building was built, you could not tie into the existing water supply (to put in sprinklers), according to the national building code and there were mechanical problems with putting in another water supply. The code was later changed, so during reconstruction following the 1972 fire, we put in the maximum amount of sprinklers we could," he

¹³ Rault Center Fire Investigation Report. 11 September 1973; Laurence D. Waltrous. "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans". *Fire Journal* May 1973.

¹⁴ "Gov. Edwards At Fire Site, Doesn't Want Another Blaze". *The Daily Star* (Hammond, LA), Friday 1 December 1972.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Lanny Thomas. "5-Point Plan Introduced, Fire Fighters Action Defended & Fire Officials Seeking Clues Rault Structural Damage Examined". *New Orleans States-Item* 5 December 1972.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Ed Lepoma. "'Thorough Report' On Fire Is Vowed". *New Orleans States-Item* 6 December 1972.

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added. "It was physically impossible to put full sprinklers, because of the barriers such as concrete walls".¹⁹ After reconstruction of the building to hotel use, it was sprinklered in all guest rooms with a fire wall every two rooms and the elevators were geared to return to the 1st floor in the case of a fire.

Another fire at the Upstairs Lounge in New Orleans on June 24, 1973, in which 32 people died, further spurred the outcry for better fire safety. People were trapped inside the building because there were bars on the windows.

National Headlines

Prior to the tragedy at the Rault Center, there were already some moves being made by the Federal Government to study nationwide fire and safety codes. Investigations to determine the most practical and effective measures to reduce the destructive effects of fire were in effect by November 1970. The chairman of this commission was Richard E. Bland and their first meeting was held in July 1971. "The objective of the commission set for itself was to identify where the weaknesses were in the overall fire prevention and control system and to find ways to address these particular problem areas."²⁰ Hearings were held between February 1972 and October 1972.

"The problem of high-rise fires also captured national attention when, in August 1970, 1 New York Plaza burned for some five hours, killing two and injuring 35. The commission noted at the time that there were no federal laws requiring sprinklers or fire escapes or fire towers in high-rise buildings..."²¹

Not long after the last commission hearing, the tragedy at the Rault Center occurred followed the next day by the Baptist Tower nursing home fire in Atlanta, Georgia.

"At the request of the White House, the commission was asked to ascertain some of the facts behind the deadly nature of these tragedies. Bland issued a statement to the press stating that these two fires underscored the need for codes: 'If the people of this nation want a significant decrease in life and property loss, it will result from their insistence that codes be adopted and enforced without deviation.'"²²

In the *Herald Traveler* and *Boston Record American* on December 1, 1972, an article stated:

"Richard E. Bland, Chairman of the National Commission on Fire and Prevention and Control, said if states refuse to require sprinklers in high-rise buildings, the federal government should. There was no such system in the 16-story Rault Center, where flames rushed through the top three floors Wednesday."²³

Furthermore, in an article titled "2 Fatal Fires Show Need for Codes, Says National Commission Chairman" from *Fire Engineering-January 1973*, states:

"In a recent statement Richard E. Bland, chairman of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control noted, 'The disastrous fires of Nov. 29 at the Rault Center in New Orleans and of Nov. 30 at the Baptist Towers, a home for aging in Atlanta, which have taken a total of at least 13 lives and injured a total of at least 28 people unfortunately may have spotlighted several different areas of consideration in the nation's fire problems.' Bland declared, 'There is no reliable way to fight high rise fires without

¹⁹ Joan Treadway. "The High-Rise: How Safe? Only One Hotel Surveyed Has Full Sprinkler System". *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 30 September 1977 Sec. 1, pg. 3.

²⁰ Ed Metz. "America Burning Study 40 years Old: Forecast the Need for Better Fire Prevention and Codes". *Fire Engineering* 1 August 2011.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "National Commission of Fire Prevention and Control: Newspaper articles".

²³ Foreman, Laura. "Need for Sprinklers in High-Rise Cited". *Herald Traveler and Boston Record American*. Friday 1 December 1972.

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having at least the aid of automatic extinguishing systems within the building. You cannot expect the mobile fire services to be able to do much about a fire of this kind without having built-in extinguishing equipment. There are no federal laws requiring sprinkler systems or fire escapes or fire towers in high rise buildings.”²⁴

By March 1973, the commission was reaching its conclusions with key points about to be formally communicated to President Nixon. Chairman Bland, in an interview, stated, “The major thrust of the report ...was that there be a federal focus on fire in all phases. Bland cautioned that fire is a “local problem, a local responsibility” but that the magnitude of the problem was so severe that the federal government could serve as a “clearinghouse, a central source of information.”²⁵

The commissions’ report titled “America Burning,” recommended that the Federal government spend approximately \$150 million dollars on a coordinated program to create a United States fire administration that could develop a national fire data system, coordinate research, establish a national fire academy and educate Americans about fire safety. “New Orleans is still reeling from the effects of recent shocking fires in the Rault Center and in the Upstairs lounge.”²⁶

Later in the summer of 1973, congressional hearings began that lead to the passage of the Federal Fire Prevention Control Act of 1974, which implemented many of the commission’s recommendations. This act established the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration (NFPCA), later renamed the United States Fire Administration (USFA).²⁷

Furthermore, Section 518 of the Standard Building Code, formerly Southern Standard Building Code, was amended requiring:

“All apartment houses, hotels and office buildings having floors used for human occupancy located more than six stories or 75 feet above the average grade. Such buildings will be required to provide either sprinkler protection or safe areas of refuge (compartmentation). Such buildings more than 12 stories or 150 feet in height shall be provided with a complete automatic sprinkler system conforming to the requirements of this section.”²⁸

This ultimately led to the passage of the 1974 Louisiana State Statute.

Local Headlines

By January of 1973, the New Orleans Fire Department Superintendent, Louis San Salvador, is quoted in the *Times-Picayune* as saying:

“‘The city is laying wide open for another disaster like the Rault Center fire, which claimed six lives last November, unless the city or state revises its fire codes.’ San Salvador said he is hoping that legislation providing for installation of sprinklers in high-rise buildings will be passed by the Legislature in May. However, he added he is ‘very pessimistic of its passage on a state level. He said, if his attempts at such statewide legislation fails he will urge the City Council to adopt an ordinance providing for sprinklers.’ ...Said the superintendent: ‘I am going to get a sprinkler system... I owe it to the City of New Orleans to try it on a citywide basis.’ He later stated in the same article that ‘a sprinkler law would

²⁴ “2 Fatal Fires Show Need for Codes, Says National Commission Chairman”. *Fire Engineering*. January 1973. Volume 126, No. 1 page 97.

²⁵ Ed Metz. “America Burning Study 40 years Old: Forecast the Need for Better Fire Prevention and Codes”.

²⁶ “Fire Report Eyes Coordination”. *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 21 August 1973 pg. 8.

²⁷ Ed Metz. “America Burning Study 40 years Old: Forecast the Need for Better Fire Prevention and Codes”. *Fire Engineering* 1 August 2011.

²⁸ *Amendments to Standard Building Code (Formerly Southern Standard Building Code), 1975 Revision to 1973 Edition* by Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc.

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be 'much easier to obtain in a citywide basis than on a statewide basis, but harder on the city of New Orleans' because of a possible drop in construction in the city because of the law."²⁹

Discussions regarding the cost of installing sprinkler systems became a major topic of concern with some push back from building owners. Mayor Landrieu and others were worried that more stringent regulations would drive builders out of the city and into neighboring parishes. Even the Governor was concerned about the potential push back from existing high rise owners and those in construction because of the cost of new sprinkler systems.

By July of 1973, Councilman-at-Large, James Moreau, was heading up the cause after the prior attempt failed in the fiscal session of the legislature. He announced that he would introduce an ordinance to the New Orleans City Council that would require sprinkler systems in all new high-rise buildings and in some areas of existing ones. By this time, San Salvador was no longer superintendent, but Moreau prepared the ordinance after reviewing San Salvador's recommendations. "The push for sprinkler systems in high rise buildings, out of reach of fire department aerial ladders and equipment, came last year in the wake of a fire in the Rault Center in which six people died."³⁰

Although it took over two years after the Rault Center tragedy, on December 5, 1974, the City Council of New Orleans, by unanimous vote passed CAL. NO. 6068, "An ordinance to amend and reordain Ordinance No. 17,525 C.C.S. known as Building Code of the City of New Orleans, by adding article 1817, entitled SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR HIGH RISE BUILDINGS." They also passed CAL. NO. 5692 "An ordinance to amend and reordain Ordinance No. 4912 M.C.S., being the Fire Prevention Code of the City of New Orleans, by adding to Article 15 thereof new sections relative to Fire Prevention equipment in high rise buildings."³¹

The action by the New Orleans City Council followed the new state fire code for high-rise structures passed earlier in the year. As proposed by Councilman Moreau, with the support of Fire Superintendent William McCrossen and others, the new ordinance promoted the use of sprinkler systems in new buildings. "From the grisly Rault Center tragedy have come preventive measures as a result of persistent public pressure and official attention."³²

The Rault Center was still in the news in 1977 following a fire at the Beverly Hills Supper Club, in Southgate, Kentucky, when Howard D Tipton, administrator of the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration said, "It's unfortunate that we have to have a disaster to get people to act. After the Rault Center fire in New Orleans in 1972 which claimed six lives, that city enacted legislation requiring sprinklers in public buildings."³³

A news article titled "Tribute to Late Superintendent McCrossen", published June 4, 2008, four years after his death, reviews the many accomplishments during McCrossen's years of fire service to the City of New Orleans. The article states, "He played a leading role for the Fire Service throughout Louisiana in the passing of the 1975 Louisiana statute requiring that all new high rise buildings in the State be sprinklered."³⁴

State of Louisiana Changes to Fire Prevention Laws following the Rault Center Fire

Following the fire at the Rault Center, State Legislators, the Governor, and the public were looking for changes to be made on all levels for better fire prevention in the State. The Louisiana legislature, in their fiscal session in 1973, introduced House Concurrent Resolution No. 200, which formed a joint legislative committee formed "to authorize and direct the appropriate standing committees of the House of Representatives and of the

²⁹ Ed Anderson. "San Salvador Says City 'Wide Open' for Disaster-He Urges Revision of State Fire Code". *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 18 January 1973.

³⁰ Ken Weiss. "Moreau Plans Sprinkler Bill". *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 10 July 1973. Sec 1 pgs. 1 and 2

³¹ *Official Proceedings of the Council of The City of New Orleans*. (New Orleans, LA) City Hall 5 December 1974

³² "Stiff New Fire Safeguards". *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 9 December 1974 pg. 18.

³³ Washington (AP). "Federal Fire Official Urges Sprinkler Systems". *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge, LA) 2 June 1977 pg. 7-D.

³⁴ "Tribute to Late Superintendent McCrossen-Tribute to Superintendent Emeritus William James McCrossen".

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Senate to study and make recommendations with respect to the necessity of requiring automatic sprinkler systems in high rise structures...³⁵ This Committee was named The Fire Code Revision Subcommittee of the House and Senate Standing Committees on Commerce.³⁶ This committee consisted of 9 members and was prompted by the Rault Center fire with Representative Charles Grisbaum of Metairie appointed committee chairman. The primary area of concern was multi-story buildings and the focus was to require installation of sprinklers in existing buildings as well as new construction. The subcommittee worked to determine the steps for updating and standardizing Louisiana's fire code as it relates to multi-story structures.

Chairman Grisbaum was quoted on August 7, 1973 as saying:

"Since the recent Rault Center and French Quarter fire tragedies there have been some communities such as Kenner and New Orleans proposing strict municipal fire codes locally. I don't think anybody would like to see the various parishes and municipalities in the state get into open competition regarding stringent restrictions that nobody can live with. That's why we must seek to develop and maintain a statewide standard of multi-story fire safety which does not place an untenable economic burden on the owner or builder, but which, at the same time, eliminates the death trap theory regarding many existing and proposed structures."³⁷

In late August of 1973, Grisbaum reported that after two days of hearings by the committee, there was nothing in the law at the time on high rise structures. He stated, "In my opinion it is obvious and admitted that the law is in dire need of upgrading."³⁸ Fire officials testified that the added cost to install sprinkler systems might be offset by lower insurance rates. State fire marshal Raymond Oliver, who favored requiring sprinkler systems in tall buildings, said at the time that he, "doesn't know a single high rise building under construction in the state that will have a sprinkler system installed."³⁹

After the subcommittee hearings in which a total of 65 witnesses in over 35 hours of public hearings were reviewed, the Subcommittee submitted their finding to the Joint Committees on Commerce. Recommendations were taken from fire chiefs in major metropolitan areas, builders, building owners, architects, Governors' office of Consumer Protection, engineers, architects, the state fire marshal, Commissioner of Insurance, and the Louisiana Rating and Fire Prevention Bureau as well as individuals representing the fire protection equipment industry. As a result of these hearings and the recommendations received, the following findings and recommendations were submitted. The subcommittee found a need for reorganization of the State Fire Marshal's Office and would introduce legislation for such in the 1974 regular session.

"The most modern external firefighting equipment in Louisiana cannot effectively combat a fire at a height in excess of seven stories.... Legislation shall be introduced to provide for the following: (1) To require all new high-rise buildings, defined to be five or more stories in height or sixty or more feet, to contain one of the following fire protection systems: (a) vertical compartmentalization ... (b) horizontal compartmentalization... (c) Complete automatic sprinkler protection except in areas where discharge would be undesirable in which case a special extinguishment or by-products of combustion detection systems would be required."⁴⁰

House Bill 292 was passed in the legislature in July of 1974. The measure made the "Southern Standard Fire Code and the Southern Building Code apply to buildings of more than three stories which ordinarily

³⁵ *Regular Session, 1973 – House Concurrent Resolution No. 200 – By Messrs. Grisbaum and Booker.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ "Grisbaum to be Panel Head". *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 7 August 1973.

³⁸ "High Rise Sprinkler Rule Considered by Committee". *The Advocate, published as MORNING ADVOCATE.* (Baton Rouge, LA) 24 August 1973, pg. 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Report of the Fire Code Revision Subcommittee-Respectfully Submitted To: The Joint Committees on Commerce.*

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accommodate 25 or more people.”⁴¹ New buildings dated after January 1, 1975, would have to comply. The bill provided that the fire marshal’s office could require existing high rise buildings to make repairs to correct safety hazards. While this was an important step for the legislature to take, the State Fire Marshal’s office was not equipped to monitor compliance in existing buildings built before January 1, 1975.

Grisbaum further stated, “Although the fire safety package does far exceed the state’s existing code, the committee still fell short of what many fire safety advocates want – compulsory sprinkler systems for all high-rise buildings, both existing and future structures.”⁴² He further stated, “The legislative action assertedly made Louisiana the first state to prescribe such safety standards.”⁴³ Over the next 14 years, the push continued for protection in high-rise buildings built before 1975.

On July 19, 1987, there was a six alarm fire at the Doubletree Hotel in New Orleans. According to Fire Chief McCrossen, “The hotel was not required to have sprinklers because it was built before 1975, when city and state laws were enacted requiring buildings over 75 feet tall to have complete sprinkler systems.”⁴⁴ McCrossen believed that only the Marriott Hotel, built prior to 1975, had re-fitted piping for sprinkler systems.⁴⁵ Later it was reported that the Clarion and Downtown Howard Johnsons, also built before 1975, had also voluntarily installed complete sprinkler systems.

In a *Times Picayune* article from August of 1987, it was written, “Jerry Jones, an official in the state fire marshal’s office in Baton Rouge, said that his office is considering legislation that will require high-rise buildings to install sprinkler systems within a certain time period. He said one proposal would give owners 10 years to install complete sprinkler systems.”⁴⁶

On June 27, 1988, *The Advocate* reported that the Senate-passed bill requires sprinklers for high-rise building over 7 stories. Act No. 422 House Bill No. 1351 reads:

*“Fire sprinkler systems would have to be installed in buildings over seven stories high according to House-passed bill which cleared the Senate on Sunday. The Senate approved the bill, HB1351 by Rep. John Ensminger, R-Monroe, by a 30-0 vote. The legislation affects about 125 buildings constructed before 1974, Sen. Larry Bankston, D-Baton Rouge, told senators as he handled the bill on the Senate floor.”*⁴⁷

“Present law exempts all existing buildings which were not considered hazardous from compliance with the National Fire Protection Association’s Life Safety Code and Southern Standard Building Code.

*Under the bill, the exemption is removed for existing high rise buildings. Bankston pointed to the disaster of the Rault Building in New Orleans as the reason for installation of the sprinkler systems.”*⁴⁸

The legislation passed in 1988 gave building owners 10 years to comply. Sen. Ken Hollis, R-Metairie is quoted as saying “We wanted to do all we could to prevent what happened at the Rault Center from happening in the future.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ “House Ok’s Fire Safety For Skyscrapers Bill”. *The Advocate*, published as *MORNING ADVOCATE*. (Baton Rouge, LA) 29 June 1974, pg. 25.

⁴² Vincent Lee. “Better Fire Safety Laws Eyed in Legislature: Holocausts in N.O. Point Up Need for State Action”.

⁴³ “Stiff New Fire Safeguards”. *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA) 9 December 1974 pg. 18.

⁴⁴ Walt Philbin. “Arson Suspected in Doubletree Hotel Fire”. *The Times-Picayune* (Metro/St. Tammany News, LA) Tuesday 21 July 1987 pg. B-3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Walt Philbin. “Many N.O. Hotels lack full sprinkler systems”. *The Times-Picayune* (St. Tammany, LA) 1 August 1987. Pgs A-1 and A-4.

⁴⁷ Capital News Bureau. “Senate-passed bill require sprinklers for high-rise buildings over 7 stories”. *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge) 27 June, 1988. Section: News

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Chevel Johnson (AP). “Deadline near for sprinklers in high-rises”. *The Advocate*. (Baton Rouge, LA) 15 December

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According to State Fire Marshal V.J. Bella, "Sprinklers are the best way to protect people's lives.⁵⁰ After that incident (referring to the Rault Center fire) people demanded a change in fire safety codes." Furthermore, "Deputy Fire Marshal Jerry Jones said high-rise buildings without sprinklers are 'just not safe'. We can't reasonably put out a fire above the 75-foot level, the sixth or seventh floor, without some help from the building, he said."⁵¹

Interviews

On June 5, 2014, the preparer of this nomination personally interviewed Mrs. Felicia Hornsby Cooper, current Deputy Assistant Secretary-Louisiana State Fire Marshal's office; former State Fire Marshal V.C. Bella; and former Deputy Fire Marshal Jerry Jones, all of whom have knowledge and firsthand experience of the Rault Center fire and the relevant changes in state fire laws.

Mrs. Cooper went to work at the Fire Marshal's Office in 1999 when the 10 years for compliance with Act 422 was expiring. Her job was to inform owners of the law and monitor compliance thereof giving extensions on a year to year basis. Mrs. Cooper is quoted as saying when asked if she believed that the Rault Center played a significant part in saving lives at this point, "A lot of codes are put in place because of fire deaths, unfortunately sometimes we are reactive rather than proactive, and the Rault Center fire was, the reaction to that was putting more codes in place, more laws in place so that buildings are sprinklered, so that people can be safe and escape the fire."⁵²

According to Mr. V. J. Bella, the reason that the laws were passed was because of the pressure from the citizens of the State.

"...it wasn't really until the code in '88 required definitely high rise buildings, 75 feet or above had to be fire sprinklered and they gave them 10 years to do it. Instead of an infinite, a time line. Before that the fire marshal's office was supposed to be making sure that high rise or any commercial building was sprinklered but they weren't enforcing it."⁵³

When asked if people were still talking about the Rault Center in 1988 he said"

"Oh, positively. Positively. That's how we were able to pass the sprinkler law. We had a tough time passing that law that's why they put an amendment to the bill to give them 10 years. See we wanted, at that time, the bill when it was originally was written it was that every high rise building had to be sprinklered, but that couldn't pass. So we put 10 years and came back, and people in the industry sort of backed it, giving them 10 years. I guess in the back of their mind they never thought nobody would enforce that, but luckily I was the State Fire Marshal at the time the 10 years was up and believe me Mike Foster, Governor Foster was the governor, he didn't want no sprinkler law, Jerry Jones along with my chief architect, we made sure, cause I knew Mike Foster, he's from my area, St. Mary Parish, so I says no Governor, we not repealing no laws. We are going to enforce the law. So we met with his attorney, who was my best friend, I've known him since a boy, so we came to an agreement I guess or a compromise, that we were going to enforce the law on a year to year basis and at that time we were requiring you if you had a building in New Orleans or somewhere, and it was a high rise, we would give you year to year. We would say Ok, you can sprinkler the 10th floor, this year, and the 11th floor in next year. But till then the other floors that you might sprinkler is required to have fire prevention controls in that building. That means you had to appoint fire captains from each floor, fire extinguishers, you had to have to have all kinds of safety and fire prevention stuff so that way in case a fire would happen you

1998. Section: News, Page: 1-B;S.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mrs. Felicia Hornsby Cooper (Deputy Assistant Secretary – Louisiana State Fire Marshal's Office). Personal Interview. 5 June 2014.

⁵³ Mr. Vincent Bella (Former Louisiana State Representative and Former Louisiana State Fire Marshal). Personal Interview. 5 June 2014.

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would have somebody that would alert the people on your floor to evacuate, you see. Or if there was a fire that broke out there, you could put it out with the fire extinguisher and all that.”⁵⁴

When asked if there were any other fire safety measures in place “Other than that little wind up thing that was found on the wall (at the Rault Center – see Photos 26 & 29)”, Mr. Bella replied, “That’s exactly it. You see, because for God’s sake when you’re talking floors above the 7th floor, we’re talking about people going down the steps and you could jeopardize life safety. So what we did, Felicia Cooper here, the chief deputy, was in charge of enforcing that law, not by herself, she was the monitor for that law....”⁵⁵

When asked, “How significant would you say the fire was at the Rault Center to impacting the life safety codes and the law for the citizens of Louisiana now?”, Mr. Bella’s response was, “Well I can truthfully say from my experience, had it not been for the Rault Center fire, which was very unfortunate, we probably wouldn’t have had life safety code at the time. Eventually we would have had to have it, OK. But we wouldn’t have it passed at that time, and we probably wouldn’t have had the sprinkler law passed in ’88, had it not been for the Rault Center. I can say that.”⁵⁶

Mr. Jerry Jones, in speaking about the 1988 legislation stated that “I testified on behalf of the bill to support retroactive law. Currently, at the time the code required new high rise buildings to be sprinklered in compliance with existing law. So we wanted to make sure that we did not have another Rault Center fire so we passed the high rise sprinkler law.”⁵⁷ He also pointed out that this “was in our State, and our citizens, who were having to leap to their deaths or leap to their injuries from the upper floors of high rise buildings. It was the impetus for the legislation to pass the law.”⁵⁸

Mr. Jones further stated:

“We pushed to pass the high rise sprinkler law. And it was basically on the back of the Rault Center fire that we were able to do that. So that justifies that. That was enough for our legislature to see, agree with the fire marshal. You have to understand, legislators are really not pro enforcement. But when you see people, your citizens, diving out of a high rise building, you have to get over your opposition for regulations and say OK something has to be done. We won’t cheat or do it ourselves, as a building owner or designer I have to fold. So there are certain events that happen over time, and usually it’s a tragedy that prompts you to make a change in terms of regulations, regulating that design that affects the community, and for high rise buildings it was the Rault Center. It was a catastrophe, people lost their lives. Usually the loss of life, shown on national television, forces the legislature to look at the solution, for people like us, who know what the solutions are come to them and say here is the answer. Here is the solution. Pass this bill. We need to protect our citizens. If you do this, yes it cost money, we’re not saying it doesn’t cost money, but what we’re saying is the benefits out weight the costs, in these instances.....The legislature seldom has a retroactive law. Our legislation was unique in that it required compliance retroactive application to the law to existing high rise buildings.”⁵⁹

Conclusion

Based on extensive research of newspaper articles, documents published by NFPA, Fire Engineering, Louisiana Legislative Research Library, the Law Library of Louisiana and numerous other references, the tragic fire that occurred at the Rault Center was the catalyst for changing local and state legislation requiring high-rise buildings to be sprinklered. Therefore, today all high-rise buildings in the State of Louisiana are required to be sprinklered, potentially saving many lives. Because of this site’s exceptional significance, the

⁵⁴ Mr. Vincent Bella (Former Louisiana State Representative and Former Louisiana State Fire Marshal). Personal Interview. 5 June 2014.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Mr. Jerry Jones. (Former Deputy with the Louisiana State Fire Marshal’s Office). Personal Interview. 5 June 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

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Rault Center is eligible for individual listing on the National Register at the local and state levels under Criterion A: History in the area of Politics/Governments.

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The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

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June 1977 pg. 7-D. (Louisiana Section, State Library of Louisiana). Print.

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Sec. 1 pgs. 1 and 2 (State Library of Louisiana). Print.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 29.953380 Longitude: -90.074524

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Two certain lots of ground, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon, and all of the rights, ways, servitudes, appurtenances, and advantages thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining, situated in the First Municipal District of the City of New Orleans, Parish of Orleans, State of Louisiana, in Square No. 299, bounded by Gravier Street, Loyola Avenue, Tulane Avenue, and Rampart Street, and which lots are designated by the Letters K and L on survey of F. C. Gandolfo, Jr., Surveyor, dated February 11, 1957, and which portions of ground commence at a distance of 27 feet, 4 inches from the corner of Gravier and South Rampart Streets, and measures thence 50 feet, 1 inch, 4 lines more or less front on South Rampart Street by a depth on the side line towards Tulane Avenue (formerly Common Street) of 119 feet, 8 inches, 4 lines, with a width in the rear of 40 feet, 4 inches, thence at right angles towards Tulane Avenue 6 inches, thence on an oblique line of 80 feet, 1 inch. According to a survey made by Gandolfo Kuhn, LLC, C.E. & L.C., Paul J. Kocke, Sr., Registered Professional Land Surveyor, dated November 11, 2002, bearing No. 556-15;R-16, a copy of which is attached to act dated November 26, 2002, registered at CIN 248404, said lots J, K, and L adjoin each other, are situated in square bounded by Gravier Street, South Rampart Street, Tulane Avenue, and Loyola Avenue (formerly Saratoga Street) and together measure 77 feet, 6 inches, 3 lines front on South Rampart Street, 58 feet, 6 inches, 6 lines in width in the rear, by a depth and front on Gravier Street 121 feet, 2 inches, 5 lines and a depth on the opposite sideline of 119 feet, 7 inches, 0 line. Improvements thereon bear the Municipal No. 1111 Gravier Street.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The boundaries selected reflect the legal description and historic property lines of the lots comprising the Rault Center Building Site.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Lisa A. De Kerlegand, as Agent
organization:
street & number: P.O. Box 191
city or town: Hammond state: Louisiana zip code: 70404
e-mail: lisannd@bellsouth.net
telephone: (504) 495-5142 or (985) 902-7990
date: September 16, 2014

The Rault Center

Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: The Rault Center

City or Vicinity: New Orleans

County: Orleans

State: Louisiana

Names of Photographers: Jessica Richardson (2/19/14); Lisa De Kerlegand (2/19/14)

- 1 of 33: Rault Center fronting Gravier & S. Rampart (facing northwest)
- 2 of 33: North side of the Rault Center (facing southwest)
- 3 of 33: Close up of 15th floor north side (facing southwest)
- 4 of 33: Marble panels at main entrance on Gravier (facing east)
- 5 of 33: Marble panel other side (facing west)
- 6 of 33: Looking up from lobby entrance above main doorways (original) (facing southwest)
- 7 of 33: Wood sides of entrance lobby-original to the building (facing west)
- 8 of 33: Lobby looking up to 2nd floor, original wood panel sides (facing northwest)
- 9 of 33: Looking to second floor corridor –elevator lobby from 1st floor (facing north)
- 10 of 33: Ceiling at lobby entrance (looking up)
- 11 of 33: Commercial space first floor (facing northwest)
- 12 of 33: Former entry door in 1st floor commercial space (facing northeast)
- 13 of 33: 1st floor commercial space east side of the building, looking toward lobby entrance (southwest)
- 14 of 33: Flooring in lobby area: note: original terrazzo below later tile.
- 15 of 33: 2nd floor corridor entrance (facing northwest)
- 16 of 33: Fireplace on 2nd floor (facing southwest)
- 17 of 33: 2nd floor former commercial space-windows are covered (facing south)
- 18 of 33: 2nd floor corner of S. Rampart & Gravier (facing southeast)
- 19 of 33: Elevator hallway upper floor (facing north)
- 20 of 33: Another elevator lobby upper floor (facing north)
- 21 of 33: Stored former windows on upper floors (facing north)

The Rault Center

Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana

County and State

- 22 of 33: Stored windows-upper floor; photo also shows what would have been a main hallway area off of stairs and elevator lobby (facing west)
- 23 of 33: Former sprinkler system (facing west)
- 24 of 33: Current typical upper floor (facing southeast)
- 25 of 33: Current typical upper floor (facing southwest)
- 26 of 33: Typical stairwell door (facing north)
- 27 of 33: Fire alarm (original) (facing north)
- 28 of 33: Fire hose box in elevator lobby (original) (facing east)
- 29 of 33: Interior of fire alarm showing date of building's construction - 1967 (original) (facing north)
- 30 of 33: Original fire alarm (facing north)
- 31 of 33: 15th floor - added steel can be seen (facing east)
- 32 of 33: 16th floor reinforced steel (facing southwest)
- 33 of 33: Ceiling on the 15th floor where the fire of 1972 originated (facing north)

List of Figures:

Figure 1. Painting done of the Rault Center by Jeanette Boutall Woest in 1968 showing the main entrance to the building and the surrounding blocks; Image courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection, Painting in Louisiana.

Figure 2. Ad for the formal opening of the Rault Center on September 8, 1967; Image courtesy of "Today in New Orleans History" – www.neworleanspast.com.

Figure 3. Image taken from the neighboring Howard Johnson Hotel of the Rault Center prior to the 1972 fire; Image courtesy of Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation and Green Coast Enterprises.

Figure 4. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Gravier and Rampart St Elevations; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 5. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Northwest and Northeast Elevations; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 6. Original Plans of the Rault Center – First Floor Plan; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 7. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Second Floor Office Plan; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 8. Original Plans of the Rault Center – 14th Floor Apartment Plan (typical of all apartment floors); Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 9. Original Plans of the Rault Center – 15th Floor Plan; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center

Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana

County and State

Figure 10. Original Plans of the Rault Center – 16th Floor Plan; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 11. Updated plans of the 16th floor of the Rault Center once the 16th floor was built out; Image courtesy New Orleans Public Library Archives.

Figure 12. 1984 Sanborn Map of the Rault Center; Image Courtesy of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Collection via Argote, Durbis.

Figure 13. Plat Map of the Rault Center; Image courtesy of City of New Orleans Tax Assessor's Office.

Figure 14. Sketch diagram of the 15th floor from the day of the fire on November 29, 1972; Image courtesy of Felicia Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal; original information from Laurence D. Watrous' "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans," *Fire Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 3, May 1973, pp. 6-9.

Figure 15. Images from the day of the fire; Image courtesy of Laurence D. Watrous' "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans," *Fire Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 3, May 1973, pp. 6-9. Gravier Street is at the bottom of the drawing.

Figure 16. Photo taken of the Rault Center fire from in front of City Hall on Perdido Street. Photo was provided by the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal. It is from one of the Fire Marshal's presentations on the Rault Center.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State



Figure 1. Painting done of the Rault Center by Jeanette Boutall Woest in 1968 showing the main entrance to the building and the surrounding blocks; Image courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection, Painting in Louisiana.

The Rault Center

Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana

County and State



The Old Lamplighter's "Rooftop" cocktail lounge and restaurant featuring traditional New Orleans' Vieux Carré atmosphere.



Wall to wall carpet. All utilities. Fully automatic kitchen. Club membership included.



Executive Health Club for men and women. Sauna Baths, Massage Department, Change Rooms, Baths.

THE RAULT CENTER

CONSTRUCTED BY

FEJTA

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC.

STANLEY D. FEJTA, PRESIDENT

3200 St. Bernard Ave.

947-6617

1111 GRAVIER STREET corner Rampart St.

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO THE

Formal Opening

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies... 11:30 A.M.

VICTOR H. SCHIRO
Mayor, City of New Orleans

JOSEPH M. RAULT, JR.
*President, East Petroleum Corp.
Owner*

GUESTS OF HONOR

HENRY ZAC CARTER
*President, Amaluk Shipyards, Inc.
Mayor of Cocodoches*

K. R. JOYNT

*Vice-President
MOBILE OIL CORPORATION, New York
WILLIAM J. HARRISON
Regional Manager
The Industrial Insurance Company of America
Long Term Financing*

EUGENE M. McCARROLL
*Executive Vice-President
The National Bank of Commerce in New Orleans
Laurie Financing*

STANLEY D. FEJTA
*President
Fejta Construction Company, Inc.*

J. O. HILLS
*Division General Manager
MOBILE OIL CORPORATION
New Orleans*

RICHARD B. MONTGOMERY, JR.
*President
Chamber of Commerce of the Greater New Orleans Area*

H. HESTER PLAUCHE
*Vice-President
Harp-Sullivan-Tang Inc.
Perlemerie*

Figure 2. Ad for the formal opening of the Rault Center on September 8, 1967; Image courtesy of "Today in New Orleans History" – www.neworleanspast.com.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State



Figure 3. Image taken from the neighboring Howard Johnson Hotel of the Rault Center prior to the 19712 fire; Image courtesy of the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation and Green Coast Enterprises.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

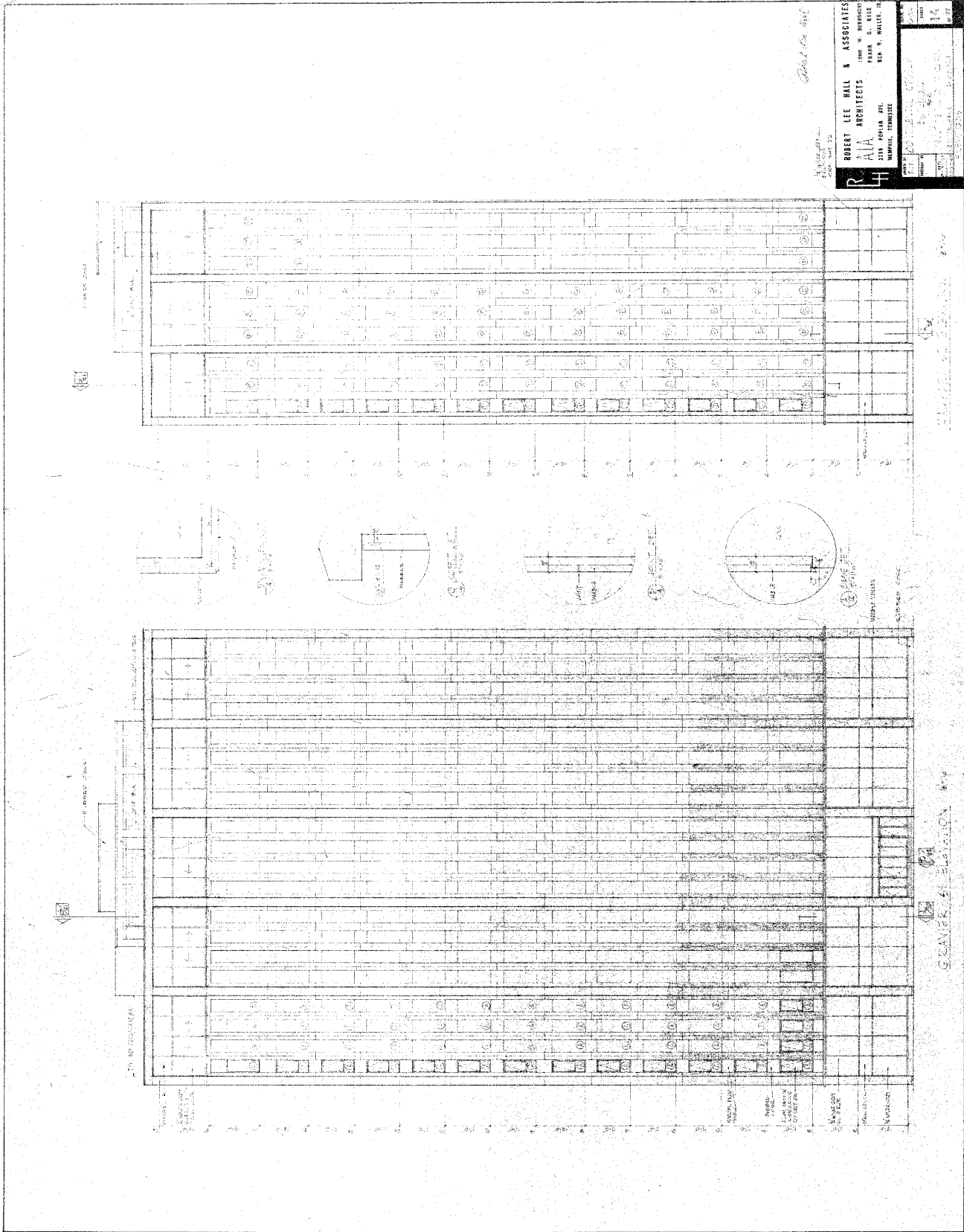


Figure 4. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Gravier and Rampart St Elevations; Image courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

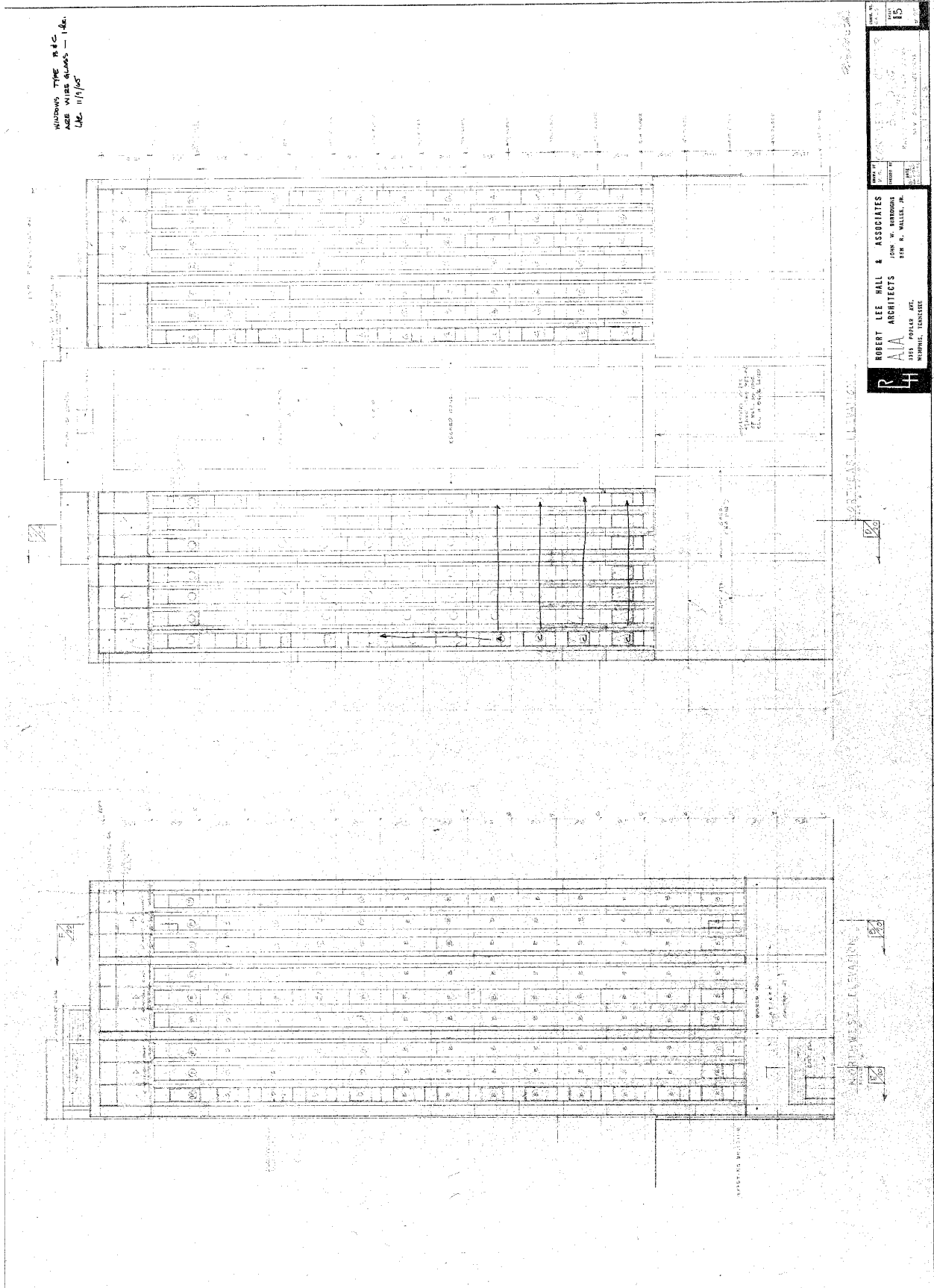


Figure 5. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Northwest and Northeast Elevations; Image courtesy of New Orleans Public Library

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

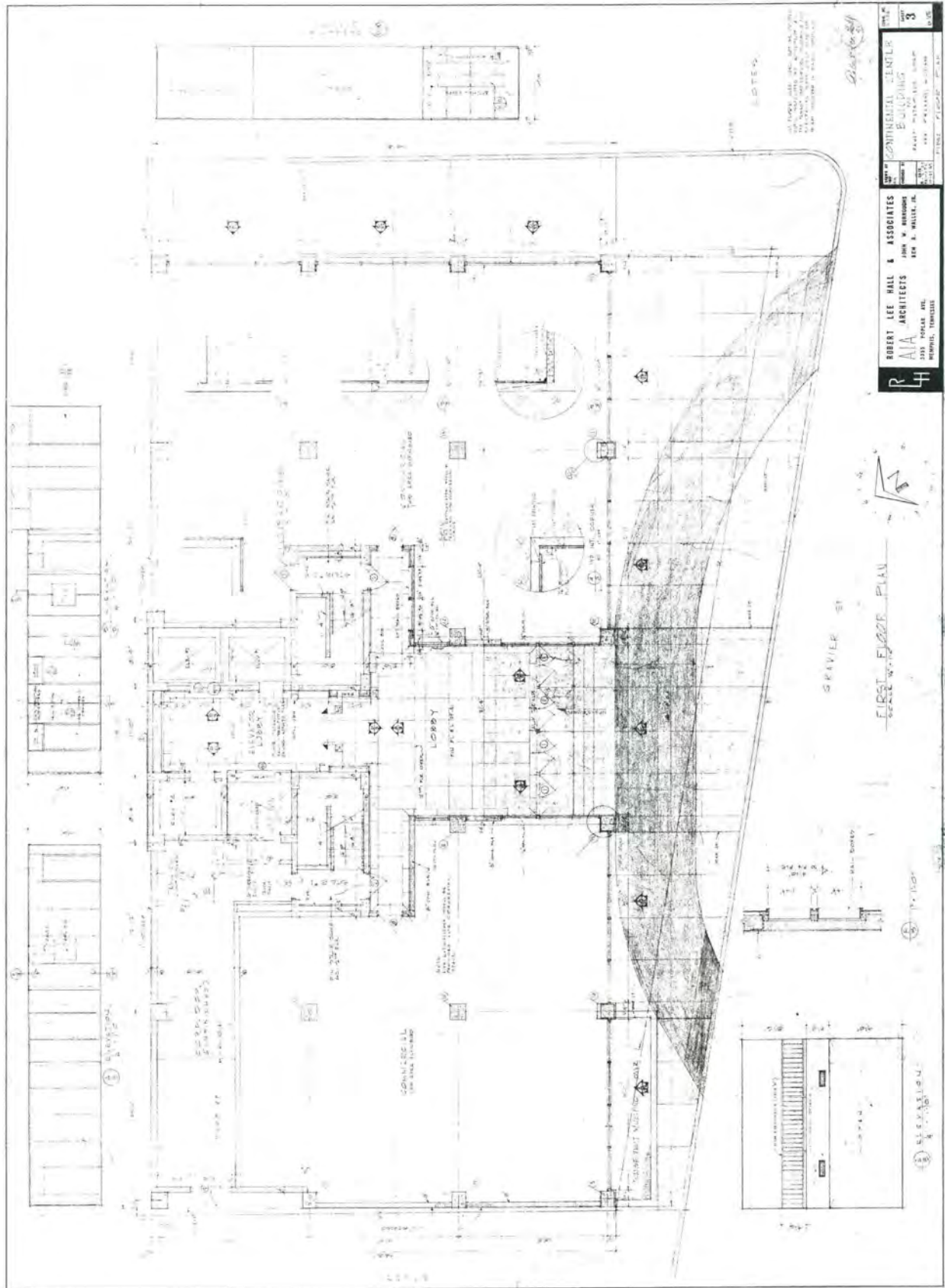


Figure 6. Original Plans of the Rault Center – First Floor Plan; Image courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

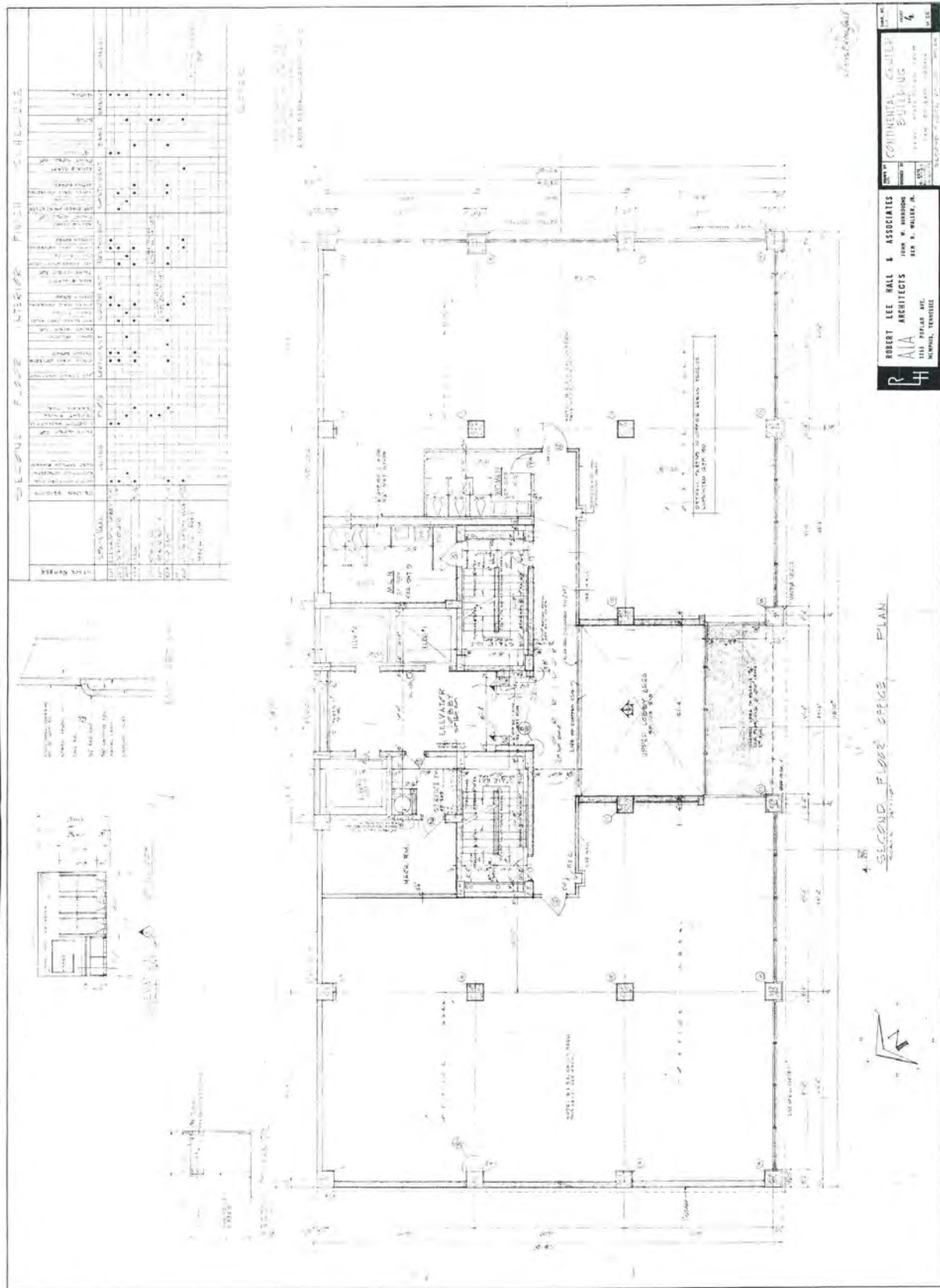


Figure 7. Original Plans of the Rault Center – Second Floor Office Plan; Image courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

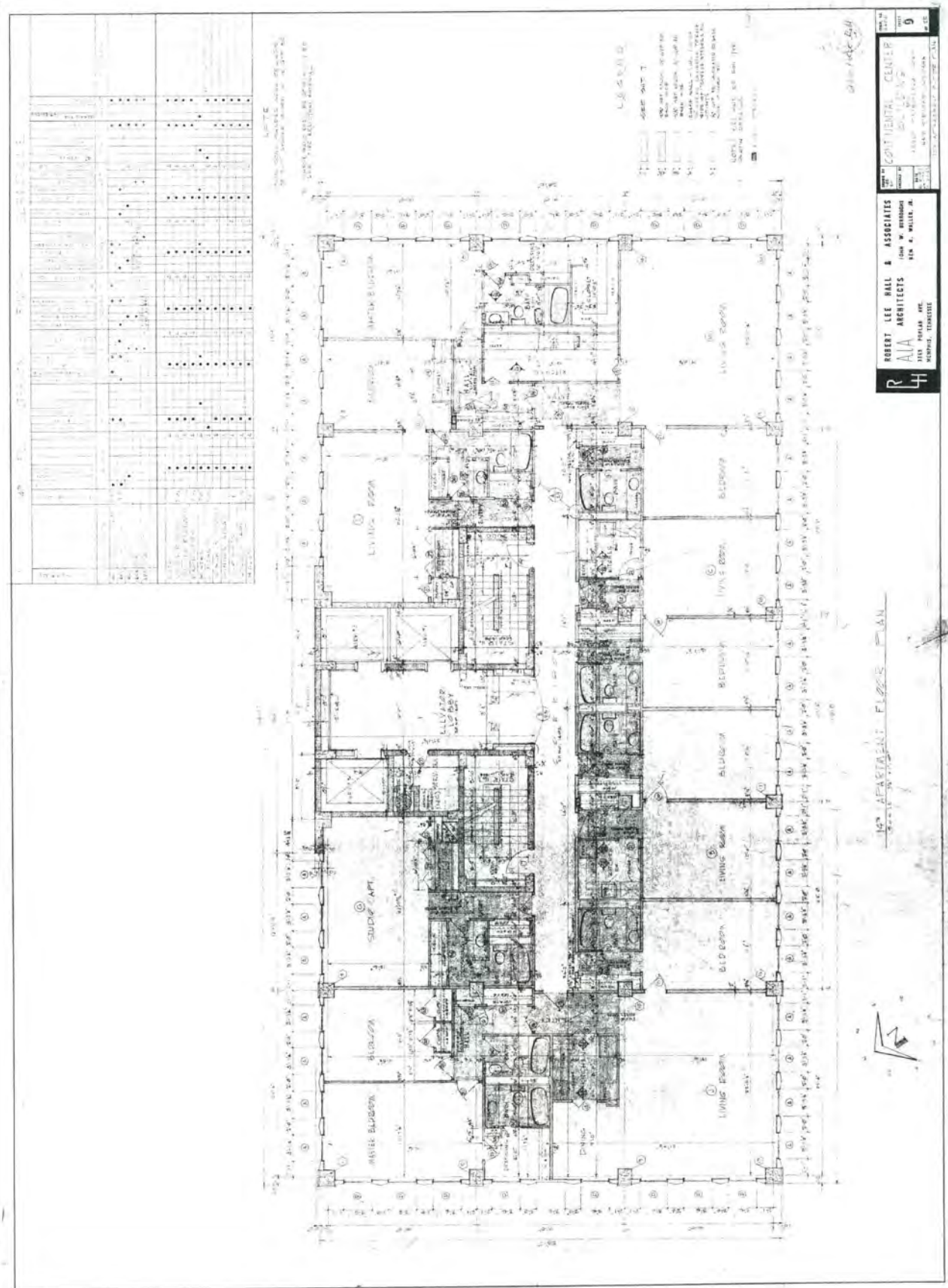


Figure 8. Original Plans of the Rault Center – 14th Floor Apartment Plan (typical of all apartment floors); Image courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

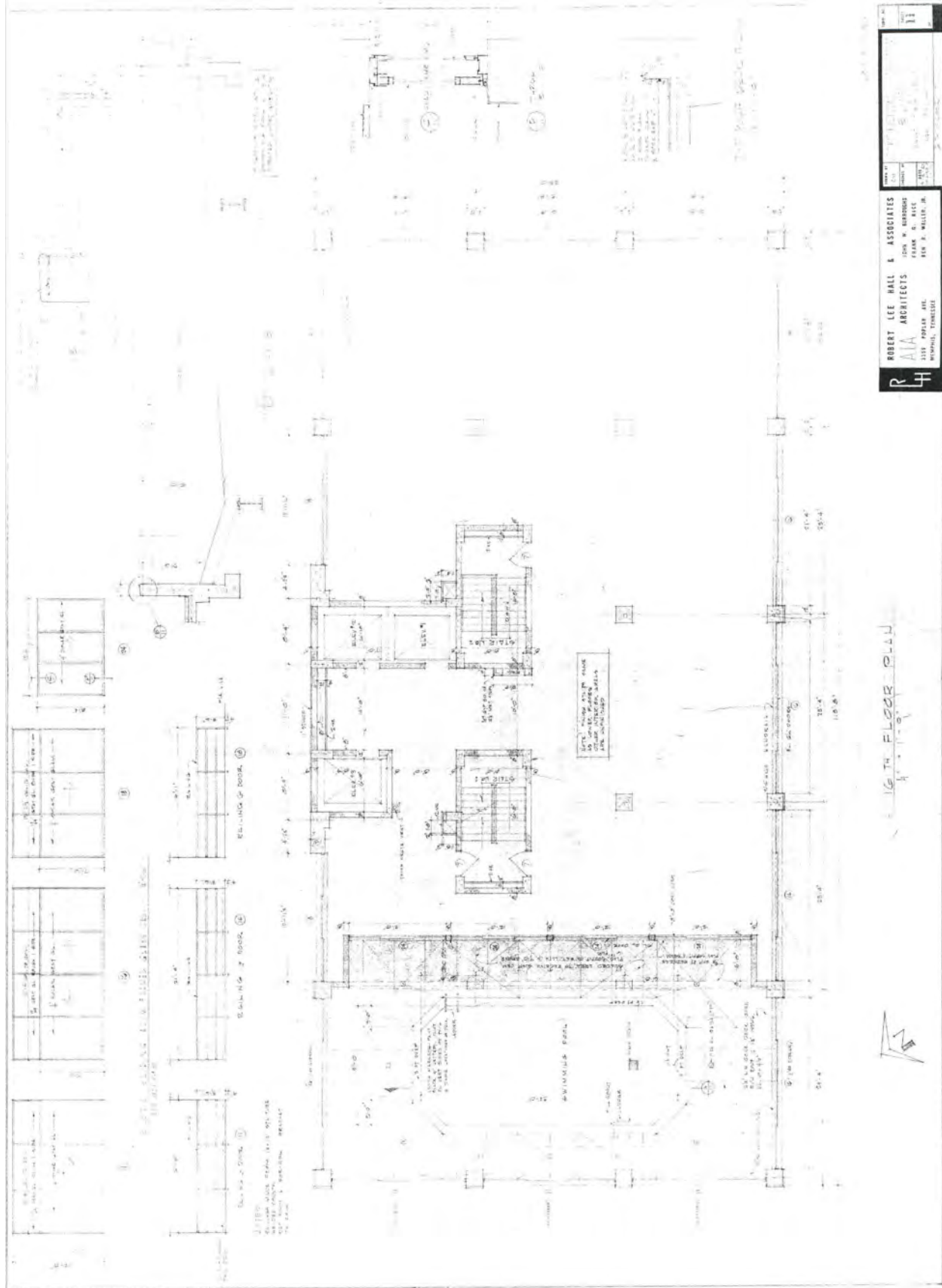


Figure 10. Original Plans of the Rault Center – 16th Floor Plan; Image Courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

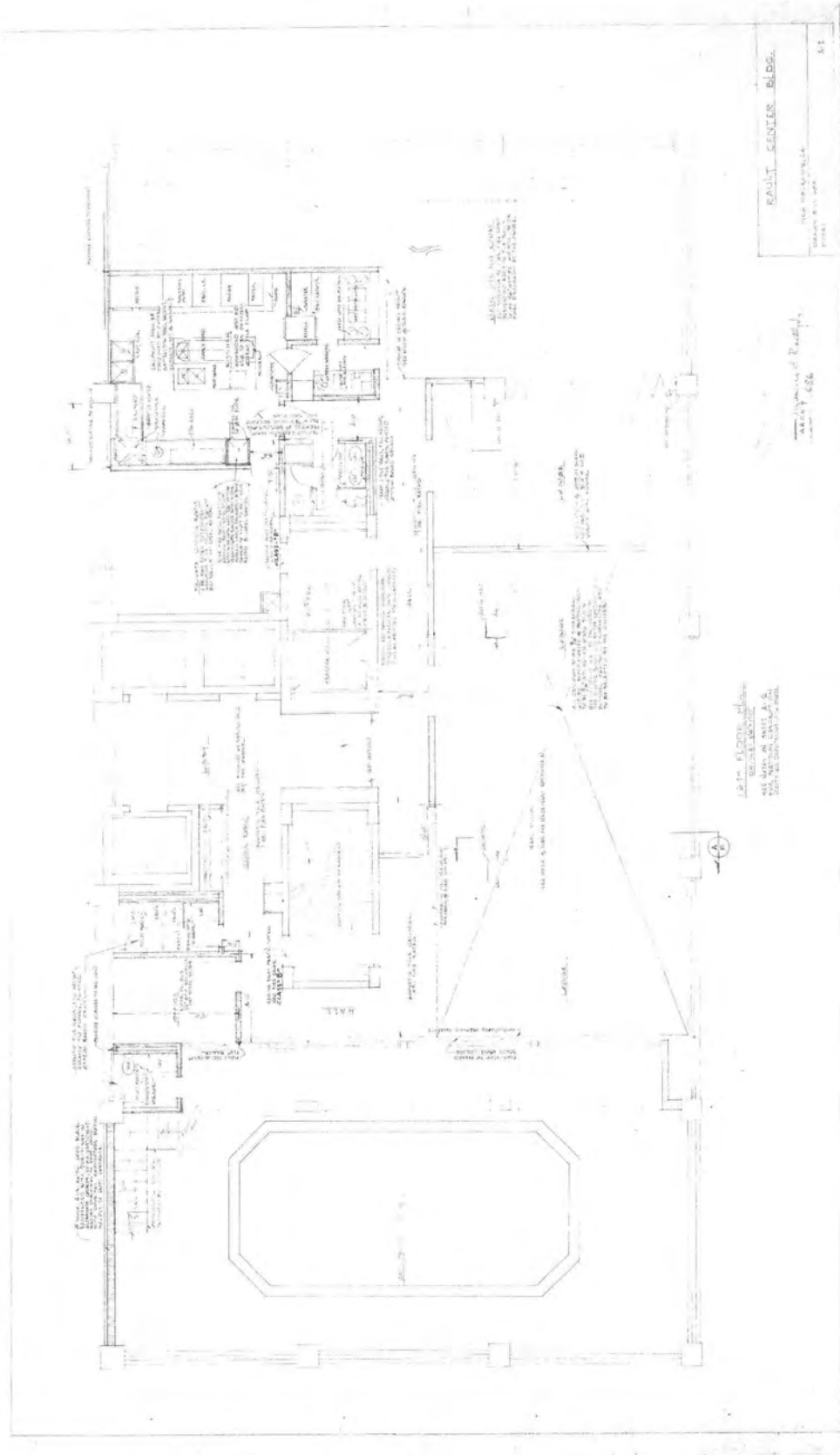


Figure 11. Updated plans of the 16th floor of the Rault Center once the 16th floor was built out; Image Courtesy of New Orleans Public Library Archives.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

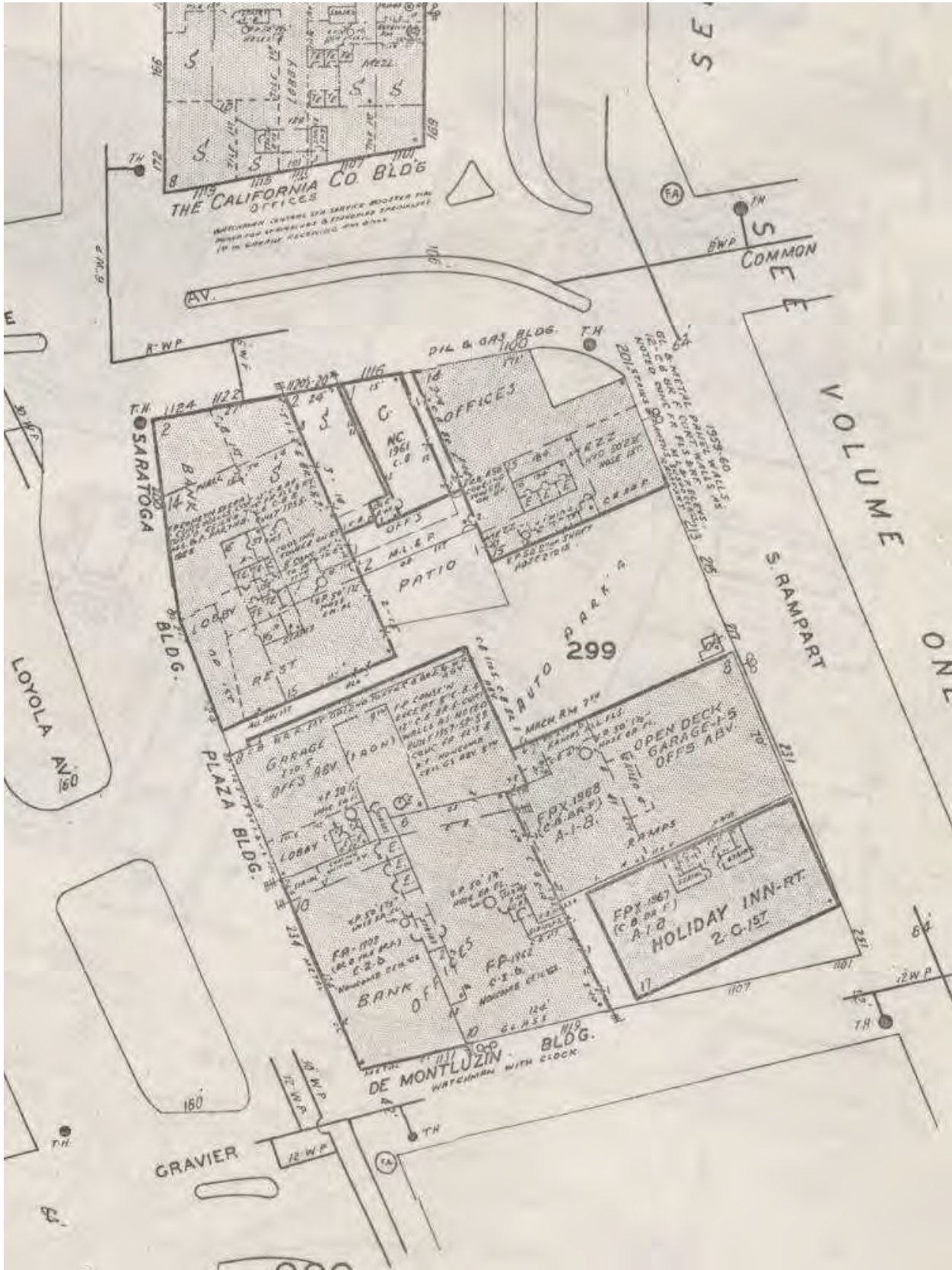
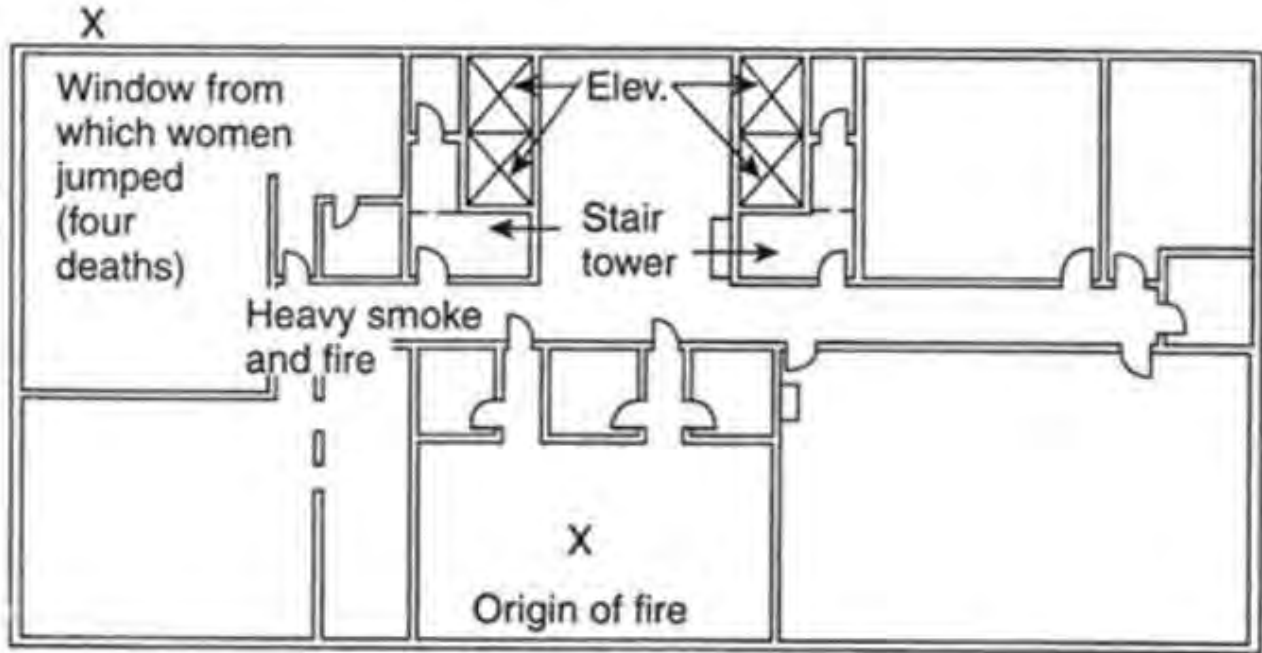


Figure 12. 1984 Sanborn Map of the Rault Center; Image Courtesy of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Collection via Argote, Durbis.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State



Rault Center Building — 15th Floor

Figure 14. Sketch diagram of the 15th floor from the day of the fire on November 29, 1972; Image courtesy of Felicia Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal; original information from Laurence D. Watrous' "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans," *Fire Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 3, May 1973, pp. 6-9. Gravier Street is at the bottom of the drawing.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State



Left: Conditions shortly after the windows broke out. This is why so many people called the Fire Department.

Right: Conditions of the building soon after the photo at left was taken. Notice that the window on the fifteenth story has been broken out, allowing the fire to enter.



The women at the window shortly before they jumped.



This is what the roof below looked like from the window where the women jumped. TERRY HAYES

Left: This photo shows the last of the women who jumped — and the extent of the fire on the fifteenth floor. Flames are issuing from the window adjacent to the one from which the women jumped. Right: Conditions in the building shortly after the women had jumped.



Figure 15. Images from the day of the fire; Image courtesy of Laurence D. Watrous' "High-Rise Fire in New Orleans," *Fire Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 3, May 1973, pp. 6-9. Gravier Street is at the bottom of the drawing.

The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

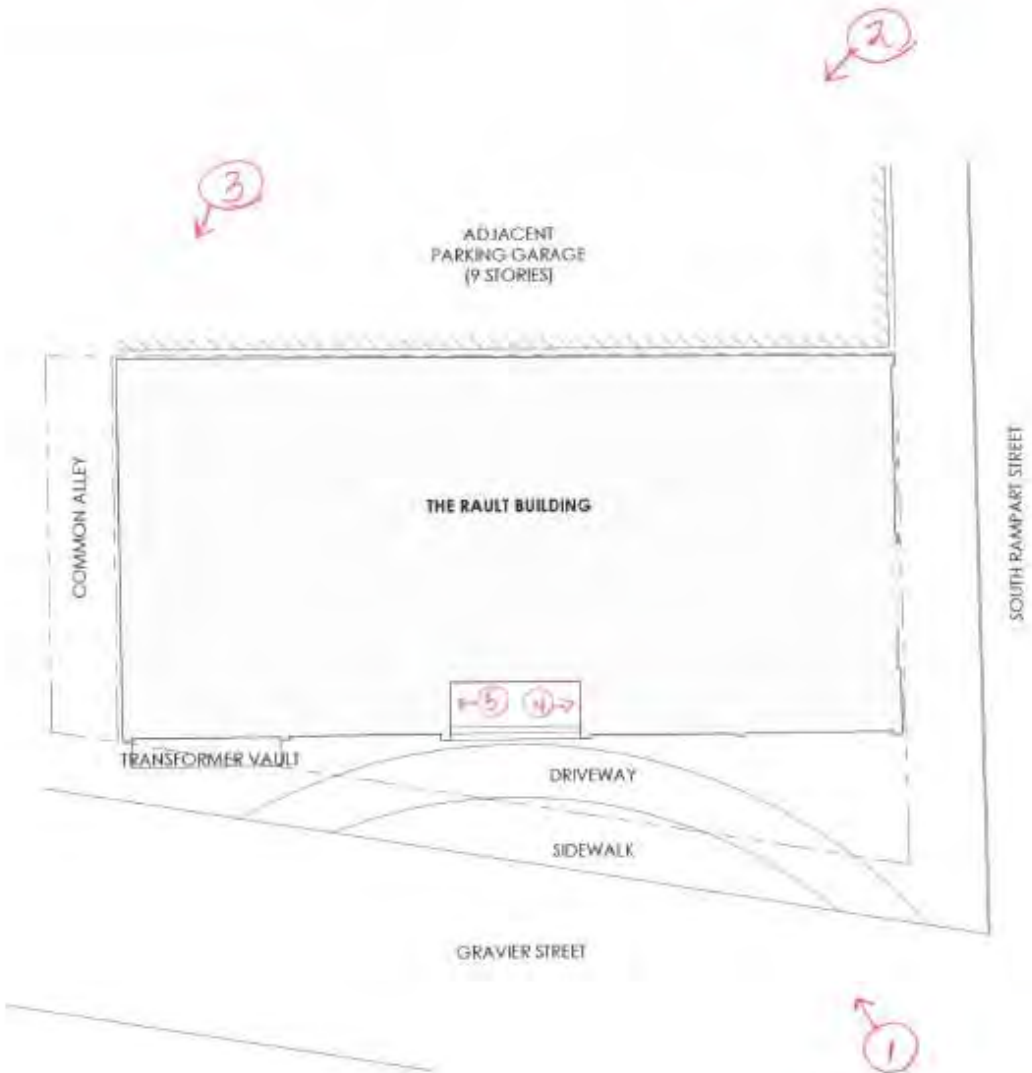


Figure 16. Photo taken of the Rault Center fire from in front of City Hall on Perdido Street. Photo was provided by the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal. It is from one of the Fire Marshal's presentations on the Rault Center.

The Rault Center
Name of Property _____

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State _____

**The Rault Center
Orleans Parish, LA
Exterior Photo Sketch Map**



SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



PAGE 01

SITE PLAN

1111 GRAVIER STREET
FEBRUARY 4, 2014

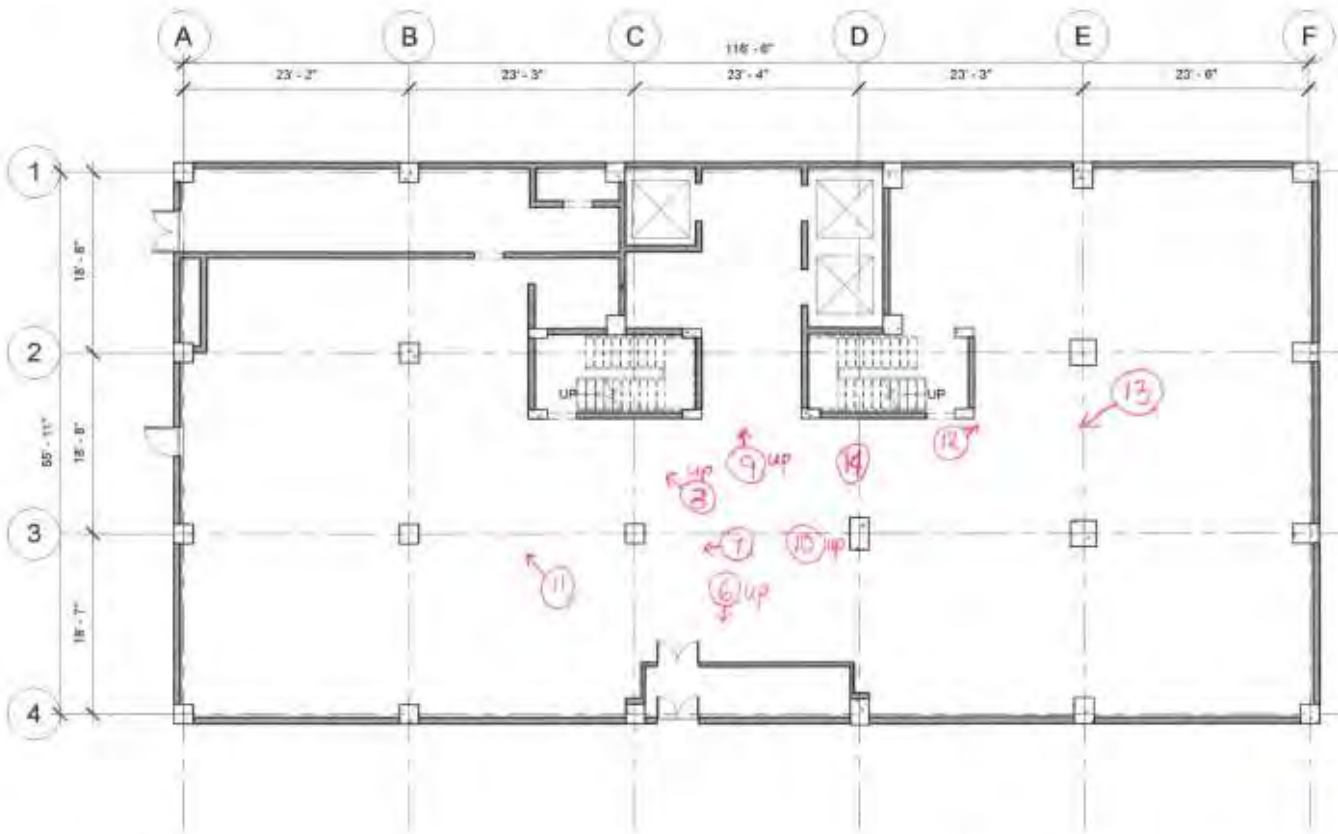
| NEW ORLEANS

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The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

The Rault Center
Orleans Parish, LA
Interior – 1st Floor Photo Sketch Map



1ST FLOOR PLAN

1111 GRAVIER STREET
FEBRUARY 4, 2014

NEW ORLEANS



SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

PAGE 02

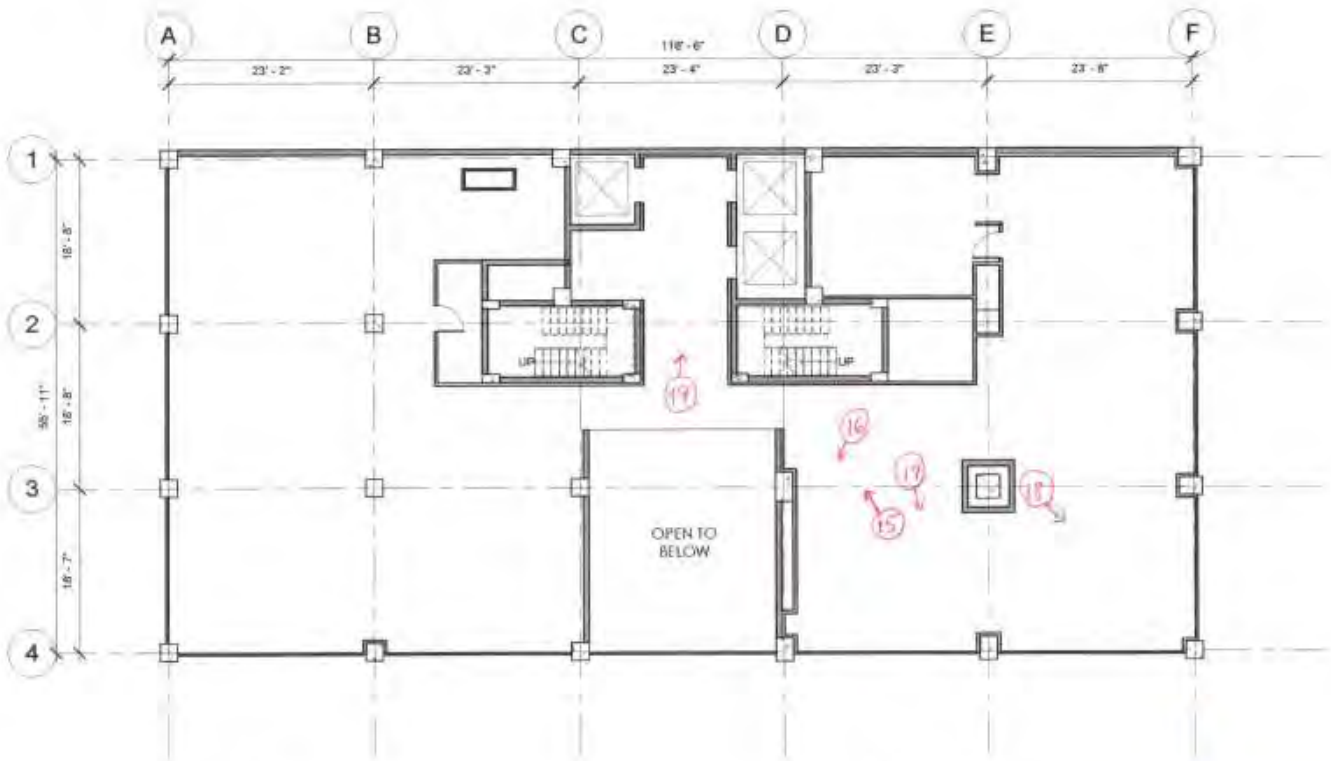


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The Rault Center
Name of Property

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State

The Rault Center
Orleans Parish, LA
Interior – Mezzanine Floor Photo Sketch Map



MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN

1111 GRAVIER STREET | NEW ORLEANS
FEBRUARY 4, 2014

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SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

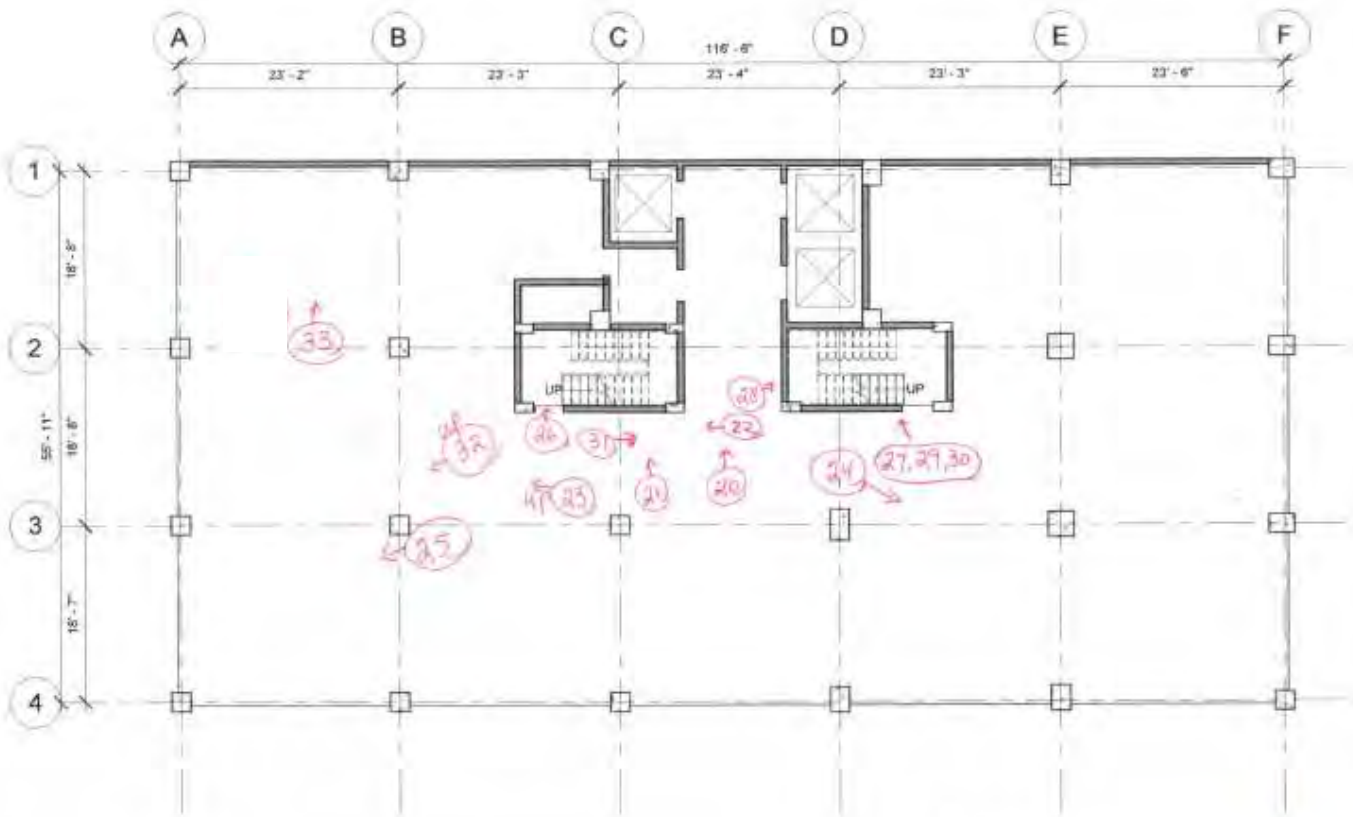
PAGE 03



The Rault Center
Name of Property _____

Orleans, Louisiana
County and State _____

**The Rault Center
Orleans Parish, LA
Interior – Upper Floors Photo Sketch Map**



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

1111 GRAVIER STREET | NEW ORLEANS
FEBRUARY 4, 2014

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SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

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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.

The Rault Center, Orleans Parish, LA



Latitude: 29.953380

Longitude: -90.074524

The Rault Center, Orleans Parish, LA



Latitude: 29.953380

Longitude: -90.074524





































LOUISIANA
BAR























D49738819

JAN 30 1967





IN CASE OF FIRE
OPEN DOOR
PULL LEVER
DOWN ONCE
AND LET GO

1-4







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Rault Center, The

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Orleans

DATE RECEIVED: 12/05/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/05/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/20/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/21/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001171

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1/20/2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The fire that occurred in this Building had a direct impact on the creation of new fire codes in LA & in New Orleans & helped the push for national standards

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A

REVIEWER J. Galbraith DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

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



8300 Earhart Boulevard, Suite 300
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Anne Teague Landis

Chief Administrative
and Financial Officer

Email: atlandis@landisllc.com

P.O. Box 4278
New Orleans, Louisiana 70178-4278

Phone: 504.833.6070
Fax: 504.833.6662

October 22, 2014

Ms. Pam Breaux
Assistant Secretary
State Historic Preservation Office
P.O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Re: Rault Center, 1111 Gravier, New Orleans

Dear Ms. Breaux,

It is with great support and hope that I am writing to you regarding the Rault Center building at 1111 Gravier Street in New Orleans. We understand it is being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Review Committee. My support, and that of Landis Construction Co., LLC (Landis), is multi-faceted: first, the significant historic value of the property, and second, the opportunity to return the property to commerce.

1111 Gravier holds the distinction of being the first mixed-use high-rise in New Orleans. In addition to that already significant historic value, the Rault Center became a bit of local lore due to a 1972 fire. When an employee in our office heard we were pursuing a job at the Rault Center, she told me "my dad worked that fire." I probed a bit because I knew her father had been a police officer, not a fire fighter. The police had been involved because of the tragic loss of human life. She still remembers that about the building after more than four decades. She also remembered that, as a result of that fire, building fire codes were changed to prevent similar future tragedies. The building's place in New Orleans history as well as building code history makes it worthy of designation.

As a native and passionate New Orleanian, I have delighted in the renaissance that has been taking place downtown. This is particularly true as it relates to the reintroduction of old, vacant buildings into commerce. Landis is all too familiar as a local contractor that the realization of projects such as that of 1111 Gravier relies firmly on tax credit possibilities. Without the opportunity provided by Rehabilitation Tax Credits, projects like this are not feasible. For this very practical reason, historic designation of deserving buildings such as the Rault Center is so important.

RECEIVED

OCT 24 2014

ARCHAEOLOGY

we build our business by building lasting relationships



Landis has had the opportunity to work on many historic buildings in New Orleans through the course of our history. We are proud of the contributions we have made to preserving the historic fabric of this city, and are looking forward to doing the same at 1111 Gravier. We whole-heartedly support the nomination of the Rault Center to the National Register of Historic Places, and appreciate the Committee's consideration thereof.

Sincerely,

Anne Teague Landis

Lenny Wormser
lwormser@latterblum.com
504-569-9483

October 22, 2014

Ms. Pam Breaux
Assistant Secretary
State Historic Preservation Office
P.O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Re: Rault Center, 1111 Gravier, New Orleans

Dear Ms. Breaux,

It is with pleasure that I am writing to you regarding the Rault Center building at 1111 Gravier Street in New Orleans. I understand it is being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Review Committee. My support, and that of Latter & Blum, is multi-faceted: first, the significant historic value of the property, and second, the opportunity to return the property to commerce.

1111 Gravier holds the distinction of being the first mixed-use high-rise in New Orleans. In addition to that already significant historic value, the Rault Center became a bit of local lore due to a 1972 fire. The building's place in New Orleans history as well as building code history makes it worthy of designation.

As a long time New Orleans resident, I am delighted in the renaissance that has been taking place downtown. This is particularly true as it relates to the reintroduction of old, vacant buildings into commerce. Latter & Blum is all too familiar as the city's largest real estate company that the realization of projects such as that of 1111 Gravier relies firmly on tax credit possibilities. Without the opportunity provided by Rehabilitation Tax Credits, projects like this are not feasible. For this very practical reason, historic designation of deserving buildings such as the Rault Center is so important.

I have had the opportunity to work on many historic buildings in New Orleans through the course of my professional history. I am proud of the contributions made by all in the preservation of the historic fabric of this city, and am looking forward to the same at 1111 Gravier. I whole-heartedly support the nomination of the Rault Center to the National Register of Historic Places, and appreciate the Committee's consideration thereof.

Sincerely,



Lenny Wormser

October 27, 2014

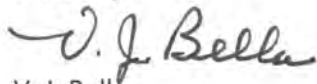
Ms. Pam Breaux
Assistant Secretary
State Historic Preservation Office
P.O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Re: The Rault Center
1111 Gravier Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

Dear Ms. Breaux,

I am writing you to express my full support of the nomination of the Rault Center building at 1111 Gravier Street in New Orleans to the National Register of Historic Places by the Louisiana State Review Committee. Sprinklers are the best way to protect people's lives and after the fire at the Rault Center people demanded a change in fire safety codes. I was instrumental in not only seeing that the codes changed but implementing the new sprinkler law. As a former Legislator and State Fire Marshal for the State of Louisiana, I can unequivocally say that the tragic fire that occurred at the Rault Center in 1972 was the catalyst for changes in the state law requiring high-rise buildings to be sprinklered. The Rault Center site should be recognized for its contribution to the safety of the citizens of Louisiana.

Sincerely,



V. J. Bella
LA State Fire Marshal Retired
1237 Leycester Drive
Baton Rouge LA 70808
225-931-1975
thevjbella@gmail.com

400 Poydras Suite 1410
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70130
VOICE: 504.598.4440
FAX: 504.598.4448
www.jtcampo.com



November 7, 2014

Ms. Pam Breaux
Assistant Secretary
State Historic Preservation Office
P.O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

RE: 1111 Gravier St./Rault Center
Letter of Recommendation

Dear Ms. Breaux,

I am writing to you regarding the existing Rault Center Building located at 1111 Gravier Street in New Orleans, LA. It is John T. Campo & Associates, Inc. ("Campo Architects") understanding that it has been under review for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Review Committee. Campo Architects has the honor of being the Architect of Record and fully supports your consideration for the nomination.

As you know, Campo Architects has successfully worked with SHPO for over thirty years on many Historic Rehabilitation projects but this is our first "Second Generation" historic structure. We believe the Architecture is unique and represents one of the few modern high- rise structures built in New Orleans during the 70's and is worthy of Individual Listing.

More importantly, I remember the tragic fire and watched it from our home in Baton Rouge while still in high school. As a practicing Architect, I came to recognize the tragedy resulted in the addition of Article 7.5 NFPA 101, Life Safety Code, remotely located exit stairs (See Enclosure). Additional significant changes in laws were adopted by the Louisiana Legislature, requiring fully supervised sprinkler systems in high rise buildings. The Louisiana State Fire Marshal required both new AND existing high rise buildings to have fully supervised sprinkler systems in all high rise buildings within the State.

While the fire was a tragic event, the code change has surely saved many other lives that would have been lost, otherwise. These are the primary reasons that Campo Architects is in support of the nomination.

Many of Campo Architects Historic Rehabilitation projects are located in the CBD, Warehouse District and French Quarter. The Rault Center's location represents a shift in the "center of gravity" for development in New Orleans but its' development is contingent on receiving State and Federal Historic

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Tax Credits. Otherwise, the project would not be feasible and the building would probably be subject to demolition by neglect, which makes your support vital to the project's success.

Please feel free to contact me for any further details of our support for your nomination of the Rault Center.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Wishes,

John T. Campo, Jr. AIA

President

Enclosures: Excerpt from NFPA



LATOYA CANTRELL
COUNCILMEMBER - DISTRICT B

The Council
City of New Orleans

CITY HALL, SUITE 2W10
1300 PERDIDO STREET
NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112
(504) 658-1020
FAX (504) 658-1025

November 14, 2014

Paul Loether, National Register Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

RE: SUPPORT FOR HISTORICAL DESIGNATION OF FORMER RAULT CENTER AT 1111 GRAVIER STREET IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Dear Mr. Loether:

As New Orleans City Councilmember of District B, I am writing in regards of my support for the potential designation of the former Rault Center at 1111 Gravier St. as a historical landmark site. I believe that it is our duty as citizens to protect and to preserve the historical contributions that represent important milestones in our country's development.

Serving as the first mixed use high rise building in downtown New Orleans, the Gravier location that was originally purchased in 1965 by New Orleans businessman Joseph Rault, Jr. epitomizes the economic success of the city during this era. The early 1960s saw a peak in the city's population, a boom in the oil industry, and increased activity at the Port of New Orleans and extensive development of downtown.

On November 29, 1972, a devastating fire damaged the entirety of the building and claimed the lives of six New Orleanians. The national news coverage of the fire initiated the debate for fire prevention and control across the country, which also served as the foundation for changing local and state legislation that requires high-rise buildings to have uniform standards for fire prevention.

With such a rich and deeply rooted history in mind, I ask you to accept the **Rault Center at 1111 Gravier St.** into the **National Register of Historic Places**. Thank you for your time. Please do not hesitate to contact me at lcantrell@nola.gov or (504)658-1020 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

LaToya Cantrell
Councilmember, District 'B'

CC: Lisa T. Blank, managing member of the former Rault Center
Jonathan Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service
Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
Pam Breaux, Assistant Secretary of State Historic Preservation Office



PAM BREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

December 1, 2014

TO: Mr. James Gabbert
National Park Service 2280, 8th Floor; National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" Street, NW; Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Jessica Richardson, National Register Coordinator
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

RE: Rault Center, Orleans Parish, LA

Jim,

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Rault Center to the National Register of Historic Places. The second disk contains the photographs of the property in TIF format. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595 or jrichardson@crt.la.gov.

Thanks,

Jessica 

Enclosures:

- CD with PDF of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form and Correspondence
- CD with electronic images (tif format)
- Physical Transmission Letter
- Physical Signature Page, with original signature
- Other: _____

Comments:

- Please ensure that this nomination receives substantive review
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- _____ The enclosed owner(s) objection(s) do _____ do not _____ constitute a majority of property owners.
- _____ Other: _____