

4250

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

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Petroleum Building
Other name/site number: Great Southwest Building
Name of related multiple property listing: NA



2. Location

Street & number: 1314 Texas Avenue
City or town: Houston State: Texas County: Harris
Not for publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 6/21/19
Signature of certifying official / Title Date
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain: _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

6/13/2019
Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Commerce/Trade: Office Building; Social

Current Functions: Commerce/Trade: Office Building

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and 20th Century American Movements: Skyscraper; Modern Movement: Art Deco

Principal Exterior Materials: STONE; BRICK; TERRA COTTA; GLASS; METAL

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 11)

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Architecture

Period of Significance: 1927-1956

Significant Dates: 1927, 1951, 1956

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Bossom, Alfred C., Architect; Sullivan, Maurice, and Briscoe & Dixon, Associate Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 12 through 21)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 22 through 24)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. *Approved May 11, 2015*
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre (0.8535)

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.757734°N Longitude: -95.359489°W

Verbal Boundary Description: LTS 1 THRU 5 & 12 & TR 11 BLK 72 SSBB (Maps 2-3)

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes all property historically associated with the nominated resource.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Adam Jones, Project Architect with assistance from Alyssa Gerszewski, THC National Register Historian

Organization: Merriman Anderson Architects, Inc.

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Telephone: 214-347-7060

Date: March 16, 2018

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 25-31)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 32-52)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5, 53-78)

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Petroleum Building

City or Vicinity: Houston

County: Harris

State: Texas

Photographer: Norm Alston and Adam Jones

Date Photographed: 2015, 2017, 2018

Photo 1: North (primary) and east elevations; Camera facing southwest; Date: 2018

Photo 2: North (primary) and east elevations; Camera facing southwest; Date: 2018

Photo 3: East elevation; Camera facing north; Date: 2018

Photo 4: East elevation of attached 2-level garage; Camera facing northwest; Date: 2018

Photo 5: South elevation; Camera facing north; Date: 2018

Photo 6: South elevation; Camera facing north; Date: 2018

Photo 7: West and south elevations; Camera facing northeast; Date: 2018

Photo 8: West and south elevations of parking garage; Camera facing northeast; Date: 2018

Photo 9: North (primary) and east elevations; Camera facing southwest; Date: 2015

Photo 10: North elevation showing main entrance; Camera facing south; Date: 2015

Photo 11: North elevation showing main entrance; Camera facing south; Date: 2018

Photo 12: Exterior view of 21st floor typical terra cotta detailing and copper roof; Camera facing south; Date: 2015

Photo 13: Exterior view of 21st floor typical terra cotta detailing and copper roof; Camera facing east; Date: 2015

Photo 14: Exterior view of metal fire escape stair; Camera facing southeast; Date: 2018

Photo 15: Exterior view of typical window and bulkhead at stepped roof areas levels 17, 19, and 21; Camera facing northeast; Date: 2015

Photo 16: Exterior view of typical window at levels 17, 19, and 21; Camera facing north; Date: 2015

Photo 17: Exterior view of typical window at levels 17, 19, and 21; Camera facing north; Date: 2015

Photo 18: Exterior view of typical terra cotta detailing at parapet; Camera facing north; Date: 2015

Photo 19: Exterior view of typical terra cotta and masonry detailing; Camera facing west; Date: 2015

Photo 20: View within ground floor elevator lobby of main entry; Camera facing north; Date: 2015

Photo 21: View within ground floor elevator lobby; Camera facing south; Date: 2015

Photo 22: View within ground floor elevator lobby; Camera facing north; Date: 2015

Photo 23: View within ground floor elevator lobby; Camera facing west; Date: 2015

Photo 24: View within ground floor elevator lobby of exit stair door; Camera facing west; Date: 2015

Photo 25: Enlarged view of Mayan bronze detailing on ground floor elevator lobby doors; Camera facing south; Date: 2015

Photo 26: Enlarged view of Mayan stone detailing within ground floor elevator lobby; Camera facing west; Date: 2015

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

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Narrative Description

The Petroleum Building is a three-part vertical block stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper with eclectic Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival detailing located at 1314 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston, Texas. The property was designed by prolific New York-based architect Alfred C. Bossom with associate architects Maurice J. Sullivan and Briscoe & Dixon of Houston. The building is 21 stories plus basement for a total height of approximately 366 feet above finish grade with an original above-ground 2-story parking garage. Constructed in 1927, the building features a structural steel frame with masonry exterior cladding. The original historic cladding consists of a granite and limestone base and a biscuit color brick veneer tower with glazed terra cotta Mayan-inspired and Spanish Colonial Revival ornamentation at the capital. A few modifications occurred over the years including storefront and window replacements, a roof replacement, and changes to the floor plan. Despite alterations over the years, the building still retains a high degree of historic integrity. The exterior design is intact, and the original marble cladding with decorative ornamentation, original stainless steel and brass elevator doors, and the original brass letter box remain in the ground floor elevator lobby.

Location and Setting

The 1927 Petroleum Building, most recently known as the Great Southwestern Building is located at 1314 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston, Texas. The rectangular site is at the northeast corner of Texas Avenue and Austin Street in downtown (Maps 1-7, Figure 1). Originally a residential neighborhood, the setting is now large largely commercial. Nearby historic resources include the Southwestern Bell Capitol Main Office at 1121 Capitol Street and 1114 Texas Avenue (NRHP 2016), the Texas Company Building at 1111 Rusk Street (NRHP 2003), and the U.S. Custom House at 701 San Jacinto Street (NRHP 1974).

Exterior

The Petroleum Building is a stepped back Art Deco skyscraper featuring Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival-inspired relief sculptures reflecting an eclectic blend of Classical and Modern influences.¹ The 174,000 gross square foot building is a three-part vertical block with a Classical composition consisting of a base, shaft, and capital.² The base consists of 3 floors with a basement below. An attached 2-story square plan parking garage is located to the south of the tower. The sculpted Art Deco tower (or shaft) extends from the base and spans floors 4 through 16. The capital is stepped and contains floors 17 through 21 (Maps 4-7, Figure 2, Photos 1-3). The building is capped with a small tower housing the elevator penthouse at the 22nd floor providing a continued vertical emphasis. The elevator tower is on the west elevation of the building (Figure 3). The primary north and east elevations are symmetrical. The first 3 floors are visually distinct from the upper levels, indicating a difference in function. The Petroleum Building was designed to house businesses associated with the oil industry in Houston. The upper floors served as office space while the first floor was intended for public retail spaces. Stone and terra cotta Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival ornamentation is concentrated at the base and cornice. The south and west elevations are largely devoid of ornament, except at the cornice (Photo 5-8).³

The structural system is a hybrid design that contains a structural steel frame encased in rectangular concrete beams and columns. This system results in column-to-beam conditions where 2-way knee braces, framed in concrete, form column capitals. The steel emerges from the concrete to form the framing beneath the hipped roofs on the top floors.

¹ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 225-228.

² Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 93-99.

³ Stephen Fox, *AIA Houston Architectural Guide*, (Houston: American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, 1999), 28.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

The building has a brick veneer exterior with stone finish on the lower 3 floors and terra cotta tile backup throughout. Windows are metal replacements and primarily grouped in pairs on three of the four elevations. Decorative trim and detailing on the lower 3 floors are of the same stone as the wall finish. All trim above the bottom 3 floors is glazed terra cotta executed in an eclectic Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival motif adopted by the architect Bossom from his travels to the Tikal Mayan Temple ruins in Guatemala and journey throughout Mexico.⁴ The terra cotta ornamentation begins on the 17th floor and becomes more elaborate on the upper floors.⁵

North (Primary) Elevation

The symmetrical north (primary) elevation faces Texas Avenue. The design of the first 3 floors are distinguished from the upper levels through materials, fenestration, and ornamentation. The base is limestone with a narrow 3-foot-tall band of granite near the sidewalk. A simple projecting stone cornice separates the 2nd and 3rd floors (Map 4, Figure 2 & 6, Photos 1-3, 9-11). The 1st and 2nd floor windows occupy 8 bays which were originally configured as 4 multi-light arched metal storefronts. The original storefront was replaced by dark metal windows with dark tinted glass in the early 1970s. Stone that closely matches the original light stone was inserted to subdivide these bays to their current configuration. The original storefront configuration is still marked by a series of small arches and corbels across the tops of the windows. The primary entrance is located at the west end of the elevation and spans 2 storefront bays with a large canvas awning (Photo 9-11). This entrance provides access to the elevator lobby to the tower above as well as interior access to the 1st floor retail space. A secondary entrance is located at the second bay from the east end of the façade, protected by a small cantilevered awning that was added in 2015. This entrance provides direct access to the first-floor retail space.

The 3rd floor windows have been replaced with modern metal windows but retain their original stone surrounds and detailing. Modillions are positioned at the sill of the 3rd floor windows. Each window is framed by ornamental arches supported by Corinthian columns and topped by recessed spandrel panels. There are carved stone medallions with Mayan-inspired relief sculptures in each spandrel (Photos 10-11). Each bay spanning from floors 4 to 16 features paired modern metal windows with tinted glass separated by a narrow brick mullion that runs uninterrupted the full height of the façade. Art Deco detailing in the form of recessed brick spandrels are positioned between each floor and simple terra cotta sills are found beneath each window (Map 4, Figure 2, Photos 1-2).

Beginning with floor 17 the façade steps back, creating progressively smaller floor plates on floors 17 and 18, 19 and 20, and 21—the highest occupiable floor. Floor 17 features recessed corners adorned with glazed paired terra cotta panels containing Mayan-inspired medallions. Pyramidal details rise above the panels and larger terra cotta caps adorn the corners (Map 4, Figure 2, Photos 2, 15, 18). The 17th floor originally had small protruding balconies in 6 of the 8 bays that have since been removed. The stepped-back floors feature 6 single arched terra cotta openings that span floors 17 and 18 and 19 and 20, each framing paired windows at both levels. These arched openings, which are characteristic of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, also feature elaborate glazed and colored terra cotta spandrels, jambs, and crowns. The terra cotta jambs feature a distinctly Art Deco chevron relief in addition to sculpted rosettes and Mayan-inspired masks at the apex. The terra cotta spandrels positioned between floors 17 and 18 and 19 and 20 feature an intricate detailed bird and floral relief. (Photos 2, 16, 19).

The step backs are treated as balconies on floors 17, 19, and 21 (Photos 2, 15). At floor 19, the parapet caps are the same terra cotta material. These caps are finial-like giving the building a Spanish Colonial touch. Each of the 6 bays features a cast stone panel with same Mayan-inspired detailing seen at floor 17 (Photo 18). As seen in historic photographs, the terra cotta pyramids or caps at 21st floor were removed at an unknown date (Figure 2). The same

⁴ Alfred C. Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), ix-10.

⁵ Selected parts of Section 7 were partially or entirely copied from pages 5-7 of "Protected Landmark Designation Report, The Petroleum Building," *City of Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission, Planning and Development Department*, HPO File No: 17L322, also prepared by Merriman-Anderson Architects.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

detailing seen at floors 17 and 19 is repeated in the panels at the 21st floor. This top floor has 4 arched terra cotta window openings occupied by modern replacement windows. The two westernmost openings were infilled with brick. A terra cotta cornice is visible at the 21st floor as well. At the 22nd level a much smaller floor plate is devoted exclusively to a penthouse for elevator equipment and other building service functions. A circular opening is visible between the 21st and 22nd floors and a single window is positioned at the 22nd floor along this elevation. Parapet caps and terra cotta spandrels are visible at the 22nd floor as well (Map 4, Figure 6, Photo 2).

The roof above the 21st level is primarily a flat roof with a small hipped, standing seam metal roof along the perimeter (Photos 2, 13). The 22nd level penthouse, limited to the area over the elevators and elevator lobby, is capped with a hipped standing seam metal roof. The standing seam metal roofing replaced the original Spanish Colonial tile roofing at an unknown date (Figures 2, 7-8). The remainder of roofing is flat composite roofing.

East (Secondary) Elevation

The east (secondary) elevation faces Austin Street with detailing and decorative elements identical to those on the north (primary) elevation. There are no doors at the street level on this elevation. This façade also features the same three-part vertical composition, with the first 3 floors distinguished from the upper 18 floors by use of materials, fenestration, and ornamentation (Map 5, Photo 2).

South Elevation

The south elevation is less detailed and partially visible from Austin Street (Map 6, Photos 6-7). The base is obscured by the attached parking garage. The middle portion of this elevation is recessed for the lightwell/inner court creating the irregular L-shaped plan of the shaft. Like the north and east elevations, the windows on the south elevation are grouped in bays with recessed and detailed brick spandrels with terra cotta sills. Signage reading "GREAT SOUTHWEST" spans vertically on the westernmost portion of this elevation. The fixed modern metal windows on the easternmost portion of the façade vary from single to double windows and follow an A-B-B-A-A-B-B pattern. Beginning at floor 17, the side of the stepped east elevation is visible. Floors 17, 19, and 21 feature similar Mayan-inspired relief ornament seen on the panels of the north and east elevations. Dark metal storefront with dark tinted glass encloses the 21st floor on this elevation. Glazing was added in 1937 to enclose part of the terrace for the Tejas Club and has since been replaced (Figure 9).

The recessed portion or lightwell features the same vertical window groupings, brick spandrels, and terra cotta detailing similar to the other elevations. There is a bay of single windows on either side of a group of three window bays (Photo 5, 12-13). The inner portion is partially obscured by the metal fire escape stair mounted on east side (Photo 18). The fire escape stair is not original or in its original location. On the west side of this elevation is the elevator penthouse, capped by a hipped standing seam metal roof.

West Elevation

The west elevation has far fewer windows than the other elevations (Map 7, Figure 3). The first 3 floors at the base feature no window openings at all, except for two windows at the northernmost portion of the 3rd floor. Two vertical bays of single upper story windows are located on the north end of the elevation. The stepped upper floors of the north elevation are visible beginning at floor 17. Some of the ornamentation continues from the north elevation onto the west elevation. The windows that were originally in the elevator shaft were removed and their openings filled with compatible brick. The 22nd floor of the elevator penthouse has 4 single window openings and the southernmost has been infilled with brick. The southernmost bays of the west elevation contain the windows on the east wall of the lightwell and the enclosed 21st story terrace. Mechanical equipment between the parking garage and tower is visible along this elevation.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Interior

The Petroleum Building is a multi-tenant office building with first floor retail space, maintaining its historic association with commerce in downtown Houston. The interior floor plans differ slightly from what is suggested from the primary and secondary elevations, which transition from stone to brick at the 4th floor. Internally, the modified L-plan shaft begins at floor 3 rather than 4 signaling the change to accommodate office space (Figure 2, 10). The original primary entrance on Texas Avenue provides tenant access to the upper floor office spaces by way of elevator. The first floor was originally divided into a banking room, 2 separate stores, and the main elevator lobby, all with their own entrances on Texas Avenue (Figure 10). These entrances were reconfigured with the 1970s storefront replacements. The current primary entrance on Texas Avenue provides tenant access to the upper floor office spaces by way of the elevators. Much of the original wall, door and ceiling construction has been removed and replaced by modern construction except for most of the original ground floor elevator lobby walls.

The ground floor elevator lobby is clad in original light-colored Botticino marble with a black and gold marble base and has a repeating pattern of 3 arches terminating in 2 Mayan-inspired carvings (Photos 21-26, Figure 18). Crown molding with a leaf motif caps the marble panels and runs along the coffered ceiling. This molding is replacement that was installed when the ceilings were altered by a tenant at an unknown date.

There are 5 sets of elevator doors along the west wall of the lobby (Photos 22-23). The elevator door frames themselves have the original Art Deco brass trim and appear to be original. While they differ from the original plans, the elevator doors are likely original especially since the Mayan brass medallions found on the doors are nearly identical to the cast stone relief at the 17th floor of the recessed light well portion of the south elevation (Figure 18, Photos 14, 23-25). There are 3 carved arches and 2 Mayan-inspired carvings over each elevator door. The original brass and metal letter box is mounted on the wall between the southernmost elevator doors (Photo 22).

At the southern end of the elevator lobby is a swinging door leading to the garage and staircase leading to the upper floors identical to the elevator doors (Photos 24-25). There are 5 carved arches and 4 Mayan face carvings on this wall (Photo 26). On the wall opposite the elevators, large openings were created at an unknown date for circulation, but has the same marble detailing remains above these openings (Photo 21).

Outside of the elevator lobby, the rest of the ground floor has been completely reconfigured and very little historic fabric remains. The second floor originally consisted of the upper part of the bank, the mezzanine store, a restroom, and two offices organized around a small irregular L-shaped corridor (Figure 11). The second floor has been reconfigured and does not retain original historic fabric except for the elevator doors and call lights.

Floors 3-16 were historically leased as multi-tenant office space and do not retain original finishes or interior construction. The historic layout of the upper floors consisted of a single irregular L-shaped corridor running from the elevator lobby to the east side of the building before turning south, with private offices or meeting rooms around the perimeter (Figure 12). Floors 17-20 were also organized around an irregular L-shaped corridor. The 17th floor featured large offices for different companies housed in the building and variety of divisions and departments such as accounting, auditor, and typing (Figure 13). The 18th floor featured large offices for individual executives, map rooms, a draft room, and stenographer offices (Figure 14). The 19th floor also featured several large executive offices including two judges with balcony access, as well as ample room for secretaries and stenographers (Figure 15). The 20th floor—the most important level—housed the largest executive offices, including that of the building developers Mr. Cullinan and Mr. Thomas P. Lee along with a reception room, telegraph office, and stenographer and secretary offices (Figure 16).

The 21st floor housed the Tejas Club which occupied the large dining room and a smaller executive dining room both with balcony access, a kitchen, a pantry, and storage (Figure 17). The 22nd floor of the elevator penthouse was accessed only by the staircase and a trip door from the floor below. It originally housed motor generators. Above

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the 21st floor directly beneath the roof was the “tank room” which housed a storage room and three large water tanks. The current partitions on the upper floors are not original or have been removed. The upper floor finishes are concrete, and some floors have exposed structure where the ceilings have been removed. The historic basement configuration has been maintained and contains building service and maintenance functions. Historic photos of the interior have not been found. Documentation of tenant improvements between the original layout and historic layout has not been found.

Parking Garage

The original steel frame 2 level parking garage entrance is attached at the south end of the building (Maps 5-7, Figure 1, Photos 3-6, 8). The east (primary) façade faces Austin Street and exhibits similar biscuit-colored brick finish and terra cotta ornament as on the adjacent tower. The original second floor windows were removed at an unknown date and filled in with paneling. There is a band of terra cotta detailing immediately above the garage access on the east elevation and again above the second floor infilled openings. The terra cotta detailing contains Mayan-inspired carvings and Art Deco chevrons similar to those on the capital.

On the south elevation of the garage there are 6 irregularly spaced double-hung windows and one entry door on the first floor and 6 equally spaced double-hung windows on the second floor. A metal fire escape stair is located on the west elevation from the roof of the garage to the ground, obscuring 2 windows and a door at the first level. Three additional double hung windows at the 2nd floor align with the first-floor openings. The parapet is capped with a simple terra cotta profile. The windows appear to be original to the garage and have a 2:2 muntin pattern.

The vehicular entry to the garage is from Austin Street. The large entry to the south provides access to the first level of parking. The smaller opening to the north is a ramp to the second level of parking. There is an entrance directly into the building on each level of the garage. The floor plan of the garage has remained largely unchanged since its construction. The roof is flat and covered with pea gravel. The same biscuit-colored brick from the exterior of the building covers the backside of the parapet walls. The east parapet is capped with a small single-slope composite shingle roof that replaced the original Spanish Colonial tile (Figure 2).

Modifications

Documentation reveals that some original features have been modified. The 1st and 2nd floor storefronts on Texas and Austin facades have been removed and the openings subdivided, circa 1972. The original ground floor, marquis-style canopy across the entire Texas Avenue façade, along with the storefront behind and the primary entrance on the west end of this façade, have all been removed and given the same treatment as on the Austin side. The exception is that the main entrance was replaced with a revolving door of dark bronze aluminum with flanking single aluminum storefront doors circa 1974. There is also a canvas awning protecting the main entrance. A non-historic sign was added to the south elevation. Projecting terra cotta balconies at the 17th floor, shown on historic drawings and visible in historic photographs, were removed and replaced by the typical spandrel treatment sometime after 1974. All original wooden, double hung and casement windows in the building were replaced in 1972 with dark bronze aluminum frames and single pane tinted glass. A few window openings on the 21st floor were infilled and the cast stone caps were removed. The window openings on the west elevation of the elevator tower were infilled at an unknown date. Several of the cast stone panels featuring Mayan medallions were replaced with accurate reproductions on floors 17, 19, and 21 at an unknown date. Original Spanish Colonial Revival tile roofing was replaced with standing seam metal roofing at an unknown date. Historic photos show copper finials atop the tile roofs. These finials have since been removed and documentation of their removal has not been located. Historic photographs also show a small elaborated chimney at the southern end of the 22nd story elevator penthouse that was removed at an unknown date. (Figures 2-8).

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Overall Integrity Analysis

The Petroleum Building retains historic and architectural integrity as an excellent intact example of the 1920s three-part vertical block stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper with Mayan-inspired and Spanish Colonial Revival ornamentation. The building is still immediately recognizable as an Art Deco landmark. The exterior of the building is largely unchanged, with the exception of the window, door, and storefront replacements and is in good condition reinforcing integrity of design and materials. Fine workmanship is evident in the intact Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival terra cotta relief at the capitol, as well as the stone detailing at the base of the building. While some has been removed or replaced with accurate reproductions, the stone and terra cotta detailing are largely intact and in excellent condition around the entire building. Original fabric is intact in the ground floor elevator lobby reinforcing integrity of design and materials. The setting has been altered as downtown Houston has grown and modernized. Most of the nearby historic buildings constructed in the same era as the Petroleum Building have since been demolished apart from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Branch Building located at 1301 Texas Avenue and the preserved buildings in the nearby Main Street/Market Square Historic District (1983). The building is no longer associated with the oil industry after being sold to Great Southwest Life Insurance Company in 1980; however, the base function of the building has been maintained in retail and office tenants.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The Petroleum Building is an intact 1920s stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper located at 1314 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston, Texas. Constructed in 1927 at the northeast corner of Texas Avenue and Austin Street, the building was commissioned by Joseph S. Cullinan, an early leader in the Texas oil industry. The Petroleum Building was designed to house the American Republics Corporation (ARC), a Cullinan holdings company, and several of its subsidiaries. ARC was an industry giant and occupied the building from 1927 to 1956 when it was liquidated, and its assets sold to the Sinclair Oil Corporation. The Petroleum Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce at the local level of significance for its association with early 20th century commercial development in downtown generated by new oil wealth. The property is largely emblematic of Houston's central role in the oil industry. It is also nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The Petroleum Building was designed by prolific New York-based architect Alfred C. Bossom with Houston-based associate architects Maurice Sullivan and Briscoe & Dixon. Bossom aspired to create a uniquely American style of architecture relying on his exposure to skyscraper design in New York City and his travels to Central America in the early 1920s. Specifically inspired by Tikal Temple in Guatemala, the Petroleum Building serves as the first and only stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper with Mayan-inspired and Spanish Colonial Revival relief sculptures and an original integrated above-ground parking garage in Houston. This was the last skyscraper Bossom designed before his departure to England in 1926 and thus represents the culmination of his career in the United States. It is also his only extant project in Houston. The period of significance spans from construction in 1927 to 1956 when the American Republics Corporation dissolved and no longer occupied the building.

Houston Oil Industry

The development of the oil industry in the early 20th century Texas contributed to the growth of cities near oil-rich areas that had once been farmland. Houston entered the oil boom after the 1901 discovery of oil at Spindletop near Beaumont, a town near east of the city. The Texas economy had previously been largely based on cattle and cotton but the Spindletop discovery caused a jump in oil barrel production from over 800,000 barrels in 1900 to more than 4 million barrels in 1901. The Spindletop oil field alone produced 17 million barrels in 1902. More than 100 oil companies placed oil wells in production at Spindletop before 1903.⁶ The discovery brought oil men from across the country to the greater Houston area, including Joseph S. Cullinan. It was in Beaumont that Cullinan created the Texas Company (Texaco). Cullinan's company was among many other oil companies that eventually set up offices in the city of Houston. With the development of the Houston Ship Channel in 1914, the city quickly became a nationally recognized oil center and later gained the label of the World's Oil Capital.⁷

The Houston oil boom allowed Mr. Cullinan to pursue his extensive petroleum ventures. The construction of the Petroleum Building is a direct response to the increase in oil business in Houston and reflected the demand for office space for the growing oil companies. The Petroleum Building housed oil companies until around 1980, when the building was sold to the Great Southwest Life Insurance Company who was moving their headquarters from Dallas to Houston.⁸ The building was subsequently renamed the Great Southwest Building and their signage can still be seen on the south elevation of the building.

⁶ Texas Almanac, 1954-1955, book, 1953; Dallas, Texas. (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph117168/; accessed November 20, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu; crediting Texas State Historical Association. p. 227.

⁷ *Houston Chronicle*, September 2, 1940.

⁸ "Great Southwest Building," www.houstonarchitecture.com, accessed November 20, 2018.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

The success of the oil industry transformed many cities across the state. Several buildings were constructed and functioned much like the Petroleum Building in Houston, including the Texas Company Building in Houston (1915), the Humble Oil Building in Houston (1921), the Magnolia Building in Dallas (1922), Petroleum Building in Fort Worth (1927), Petroleum Building in Midland (1928), the Gulf Building in Houston (1929), Tower Petroleum in Dallas (1931), and the People's Petroleum Building in Tyler (1932). These buildings were constructed as a direct result of the boom in the petroleum industry in early 20th century Texas.⁹

The Petroleum Building

The Petroleum Building Company was granted a charter on May 25, 1925 for the construction of multi-story office building in downtown Houston.¹⁰ Prior to the start of construction in 1925, the site of the Petroleum Building at 1314 Texas Avenue was almost exclusively residential but was an area in transition as downtown Houston grew and developed. The Petroleum Building was constructed between 1925 and 1927 by Joseph Cullinan to house a variety of oil companies in a single building, all of which were operated under the umbrella of the American Republics Corporation, a Cullinan holdings company. The J. S. Cullinan interests underwrote this project through the Petroleum Building Company which was led by Thomas P. Lee. Fidelity Trust Company, a bank directed by Lee, occupied the first floor from 1927 to 1951.

Upon its completion the Petroleum Building housed 15 associated subsidiary oil companies including Republic Production Company, American Petroleum Company, Federal Petroleum Company, Papoose Oil Company, Pueblo Oil Company, Pennsylvania Petroleum Company, Petroleum Coal and Iron Company, Galena-Signal Oil Company, Fidelity Securities Company, Petroleum Iron Works Company, Pennsylvania Car Company, Pennsylvania Shipyards, Pennsylvania Tank Line, Fidelity Trust Company, and Intracoastal Towing and Transportation Company.¹¹ Houston Natural Gas and Halliburton was also a tenant of the building. A clear giant in the industry, as of 1932 American Republics Corporation "owned or controlled 1,750,000 acres of oil lands in Texas and other states."¹²

Executive offices for the companies were located on the 18th – 20th floors of the building. Joseph Cullinan and his son, Craig, Thomas Lee, and Edward F. Woodward had large offices on the 20th floor (Figure 16). Originally designed as a dining room for the employees of Cullinan's company, by 1929 the 21st floor was instead occupied by the newly-formed Tejas Club. Founded by J.K. Dorrance, W.T. Carter, Hugh Potter, and Craig F. Cullinan, the Tejas Club was a social club comprised of 50 young men in Houston (Figures 9 & 17). The club, established in 1929, declared its purpose to be "the maintenance of comfortable quarters for the association of mutually agreeable personnel; the pursuit and furtherance of such literary and artistic undertakings as may be deemed suitable and convenient; and the study and preservation of the historic traditions of Texas."¹³ The club required an initiation fee as well as a monthly membership fee and capped its membership at 50 members. The club was informal and did not count officers or directors among its members. The Tejas Club occupied the 21st floor for 44 years before vacating in 1973.¹⁴ Reasons for its move are unknown.

⁹ Marta Galiki, "The Architecture of Oil," *Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*, Fall 1997, 46-49; Jamie Lofgren, "Texas Skyscrapers in the 1920s," *Texas Architect*, Vol. 38 No. 2, March-April 1988: (22-27).

¹⁰ "Plans to Erect 20-Story Houston Office Building," *The Taylor Daily Press*, May 27, 1925.

¹¹ "Plans for 20-Story Skyscraper Made," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, August 9, 1925.

¹² "T.P. Lee Battles for \$42,000,000 Corporation," *Austin Statesman*, February 25, 1932.

¹³ "Tejas-Friends Paradise," *The Houston Gargoyle*, October 6, 1929, p. 5, 27-28.

¹⁴ Monsanto, Daniel E, *Houston: Postcard History Series* (Charleston, South Carolina, Arcadia Publishing, 2009), p. 37.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Joseph S. Cullinan (1860 - 1937)

Originally engaged in the oilfield business in Pennsylvania, Joseph spent 13 years there with Standard Oil before moving to Corsicana in 1897 to pursue new opportunities in the Texas oil industry. He founded the first pipeline and refinery company in Texas, J. S. Cullinan & Company which was the nucleus of the later Magnolia Petroleum Company, and quickly became an industry leader. Moving to Beaumont in 1902, he founded the Texas Company (Texaco), of which he was president from its founding in 1903 to 1913.¹⁵ He resigned from the Texas Company in 1913. However, this resignation did not preclude his involvement in the oil industry for the next two decades. He created or purchased 10 oil companies total over the course of his career, including Farmers Petroleum Company in 1913.¹⁶

According to Tommy Stringer, “Farmers Petroleum did so well that it became necessary to dissolve the company because its capitalization and corporate powers were too limited for further development and expansion. The result was two companies: Republic Production Company, for exploration and production; and the American Petroleum Company, a pipeline and refining company. Each had an authorized capital of \$3 million. Also involved in the dissolution of Farmers Petroleum was the organization of American Republics Corporation, chartered under Delaware law with an authorized capital of \$10 million.”¹⁷

Cullinan then created American Republics Corporation (ARC) with Thomas P. Lee, Will C. Hogg, and Edward F. Woodward in 1916 to engage in oil exploration and production.¹⁸

By 1926, the American Republics Corporation had outgrown its offices in the Carter Building (formerly the Second National Bank Building). This growth led Cullinan to commission a new skyscraper to house his company. At the time, Houston was working to cultivate an image of a mature, modern, and progressive city, and Cullinan wanted his building to reflect that the city was open for business. The Petroleum Building was intended to house a variety of companies in the petroleum industry under the American Republics Corporation. At its height, the American Republics Corporation controlled over 2 million acres of oil fields and approximately \$74 million in assets.

Leading the company, Cullinan “successfully waged war for control of the far-flung enterprise, defeating a powerful group of stockholders.”¹⁹ The stakeholders then left for a variety of reasons. Thomas P. Lee left the company between 1927 and 1929 after Cullinan handed the company to his son. Partner Will C. Hogg remained a stakeholder until his death in 1930. Emerson P. Woodward became the president of the Republic Production Company under the American Republics Corporation and retired after the sale of his company in 1935. Mr. Cullinan was the president of ARC from 1916 until 1929, when he handed the company to his son, Craig F. Cullinan. During the Great Depression J. S. Cullinan resumed the presidency from 1932 until 1936 when his son reassumed the leadership position. Craig remained the president until his death in 1950.²⁰ At this time, Torkild

¹⁵ “Oil Company Founder Dies on Thursday: J.S. Cullinan Laid Magnolia Groundwork in First Texas Field,” *The Paris Evening News*, March 11, 1937.

¹⁶ Anna Mod and Gregory Smith, “Texas Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2002, 11-13.

¹⁷ Tommy Stringer, “Joseph S. Cullinan: Pioneer in Texas Oil,” *East Texas Historical Journal* Volume 19, Issue 2 (1982): 55.

¹⁸ Stringer, Tommy W., “CULLINAN, JOSEPH STEPHEN,” *The Handbook of Texas Online*,

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcu07>; Cullinan also worked with James L. Autry at Texaco. It’s believed he was to be part of ARC but passed away in 1915 after suffering a stroke.

¹⁹ “Oil Company Founder Dies on Thursday: J.S. Cullinan Laid Magnolia Groundwork in First Texas Field,” *The Paris Evening News*, March 11, 1937.

²⁰ “Oil Deal is Confirmed,” *The Austin American*, November 5, 1954; “Craig Cullinan is Found Fatally Wounded in Home,” *Corsicana Daily Sun*, August 15, 1950.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Rieber of Texaco assumed the presidency. Six years later in 1956, the American Republics Corporation was liquidated, and its assets sold to the Sinclair Oil Corporation for \$108 million.²¹

Until his death in 1937, Joseph Cullinan was an important leader in the oil industry, real estate developer, and philanthropist in Houston. Between 1910s and 1920s, Cullinan was an important advocate for the development of the Houston Ship Channel and the creation of Hermann Park. Cullinan admired the work of landscape architect George E. Kessler and was largely responsible for bringing him to Houston to design the park.²² In addition, Cullinan was also behind the development of the affluent 37 acre garden suburb of Shadyside, located just west of Hermann Park. Designed by George Kessler and Herbert A. Kipp, the neighborhood was largely built out in the 1920s and featured the eclectic architecture of several prolific architects including John Staub.²³ Several members of the Cullinan family then lived in this neighborhood.²⁴

Cullinan was also a key supporter of the Houston Symphony and the Museum of Fine Arts (Houston). Over the course of his career, Cullinan was involved with the United States Chamber of Commerce, the board of directors of C.R.B. educational foundation, the Houston Cotton Exchange, the National Foreign Trade Council, the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Mount Rushmore National Memorial committee, and the National Association of Audubon clubs. He also maintained a close relationship with President Herbert Hoover serving as his special advisor in the Food Administration during World War I. Cullinan passed away of pneumonia while visiting Hoover in California in March of 1937.²⁵

Thomas P. Lee (1871 – 1965)

As the vice president and director of the American Republics Corporation, Lee was a prominent figure in the development of the petroleum industry in Texas. Originally from West Virginia, he began working in the oilfields of his home state at the age of 16. He came to Texas and joined Joseph Cullinan at The Texas Company in 1903, rising to the position of director of production. The two became friends and he left The Texas Company with Cullinan in 1913 to help found the American Republics Corporation. Among his many business and philanthropic interests, Mr. Lee was the president of the Petroleum Building Company, the entity that developed the Petroleum Building, and was very active in the design and construction of the building. Mr. Lee left the American Republics Corporation in 1927 and he was replaced by J. S. Cullinan's son Craig as vice president.²⁶ He was nominated for governor of Texas by the Republican Party in 1924 but refused the nomination. His home in Houston, the Link-Lee House, is a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The house, in conjunction with the efforts of Mr. Lee and his family, were the nucleus for the founding of St. Thomas University in Houston, Texas in 1947.²⁷

²¹ Williams, Greg H, *The Liberty Ships of WWII*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2014), 249-250.

²² Barrie Scardino Bradley, *Houston's Hermann Park: A Century of Community*, (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 2014), 29-30.

²³ Stephen Fox, "Public Art and Private Places: Shadyside," *Houston Review*, 2 (Winter 1980): 37-60. Fox's article includes more information on the overall Civic Art Movement, an attempt at a large scale planning effort in Houston; Cheryl Caldwell Ferguson, *Highland Park and River Oaks: The Origins of Garden Suburban Community Planning in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 53-55; Stephen Fox and Barrie Scardino, "Andrew Jackson and Margaret Cullinan Wray House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1993, 8-9 to 8-12.

²⁴ A notable example is the home of Cullinan's daughter, the Andrew Jackson and Margaret Cullinan Wray House, designed by John Staub in 1939 (NRHP 1993).

²⁵ "Oil Company Founder Dies on Thursday: J.S. Cullinan Laid Magnolia Groundwork in First Texas Field," *The Paris Evening News*, March 11, 1937; Tommy Stringer, "Joseph S. Cullinan: Pioneer in Texas Oil," *East Texas Historical Journal* Volume 19, Issue 2 (1982): 57.

²⁶ "T.P. Lee, Houston Oil Man, Succumbs," *Sunday American-Statesman*, February 5, 1939.

²⁷ Lynn Edmundson, "Link-Lee House, Houston, Harris County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1999, 8-22 to 8-23.

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Architectural Significance

1920s Stepped-Back Skyscraper

The New York Zoning Law of 1916 greatly influenced the development of the stepped-back skyscraper and fostered a sense of optimism among architects and urban planners about the possibilities of the new rational modern city.²⁸ The organic and uncoordinated growth of urban centers between the 1890s and 1910s caused many unintended consequences including congestion and overbuilding. A major impetus for the law stemmed from the construction of the 1915 Equitable Building in New York City. High land prices and increased urban density led to “a compressed U-shaped plan with front light court to its ultimate dimensions, depriving adjacent streets and property of sunlight.”²⁹ Responding to these conditions, urban reformers sought a solution to these new problems and to protect private property values by passing a zoning law.³⁰ The new zoning law resulted in height restrictions and specific requirements about the stepped-back or recessed portions of tower and capital.

Similar zoning laws spread across the country which informed and shaped a wide variety of new and innovative stepped-back skyscrapers in the late 1910s through the 1930s. The setback formula as it became known was undoubtedly the most powerful factor shaping the new skyscraper form in the early 20th century. It provided a new framework for skyscrapers that was not only modern but exclusively American. Seen as a definite departure from traditional styles that required heavy masonry construction, this new form was made possible by steel frame construction, thin walls and the use of other new materials. These modern skyscrapers still retained key features of historical styles in the form of elaborate and often eclectic cast stone ornamentation applied at the base and capital. This allowed for a gradual transition and acceptance of the new building type.³¹

Another pivotal event in the evolution of stepped-back skyscraper design was the Chicago Tribune Tower competition in 1922. This international architectural competition was a contest to design “the most beautiful and distinctive office building in the world” for the Chicago Tribune corporate headquarters.³² Widely published, the competition showcased rich experimentation with the new form. Over “263 architects from three continents responded with a broad constellation of designs ranging from Byzantine to Bauhaus.”³³

In particular, the second-place entry by Eliel Saarinen gained quite a bit of recognition and inspired skyscraper design through the 1920s and 1930s. Saarinen’s design was in direct response to the 1922 publication of Hugh Ferriss’s *Study for the Maximum Mass Permitted by the 1916 New York Zoning Law*, which illustrated the need for more light at the street level with the ever-increasing height of buildings of the era. Louis Sullivan even praised Saarinen’s design writing “Rising from the earth in suspiration as of the earth and as of the universal genius of man, it ascends and ascends in beauty lofty and serene to the full height limit of the Chicago building ordinance, until its lovely crest seems at one with the sky.”³⁴ The competition and Saarinen’s design had a significant impact and encouraged quite an architectural debate which in turn fostered more experimentation with the new form and

²⁸ Carol Willis, “Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, No 1 (March 1986): 47-59.

²⁹ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 139.

³⁰ Carol Willis, “Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, No 1 (March 1986): 47-59.

³¹ Ralph T. Walker, “A New Architecture,” *The Architectural Forum*, Vol. 48 No. 1 (January 1928): 1-23; Carol Willis, “Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, No 1 (March 1986): 47-59; Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 281.

³² *Ibid*, 284.

³³ Katherine Solomonson, *The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition: Skyscraper Design and Cultural Change in the 1920s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

³⁴ Louis H. Sullivan, “The Chicago Tribune Competition,” *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 53 No. 2 (February 1923): 153.

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technology.³⁵ In 1926, the Barclay-Vesey Building in New York was completed by Ralph Walker of the firm McKenzie, Voorhees and Gmelin. It served as one of the first physical realizations of the stepped back form and a model for future projects.³⁶

The modernistic skyscraper movement reached Houston in the late 1920s and many of these buildings were characterized by the U or L-shaped plans, three-part vertical block arrangement, and elaborate ornamentation on the primary street facing elevations.³⁷ The 21-story Petroleum Building was the first building inspired by both Saarinen and Walker's designs to be built in the city and clearly embodied these characteristics. The Petroleum Building's capital was similar to that of the Barclay-Vesey Building, with two stepped-back layers of double-height arcades and a hipped roof penthouse. The Petroleum Building differed from its New York counterpart in the design of the shaft and base—as the stepped-back vocabulary is applied to the narrow L-shaped tower with a light court as opposed to the larger stepped-back massing of the Barclay-Vesey Building.³⁸

Comparable stepped-back skyscrapers appeared in downtown Houston in the late 1920s. The Niels Esperson Building (1927) and the Gulf Building (1929, NRHP 1983) serve as important comparisons for the Petroleum Building. The 32-story Niels Esperson Building was designed by John Ebersson with teared massing and heavy Classical influence culminating in the choragic monument at the capital.³⁹ The Gulf Building designed by Alfred Finn, with Kenneth Franzheim and J.E.R. Carpenter emulated Saarinen's design for the Tribune Tower.

At thirty-seven stories and 428 feet, the Gulf Building, upon completion, was the tallest building in Texas. Terra-cotta casting permitted a close replication of Saarinen's ornamental modeling, although Finn made certain changes in application; for example, the stepped-back massing begins much closer to the top than in Saarinen's design. Like the Bassett Tower in El Paso, the Gulf Building rises free on all sides above a six-story plinth, which contains major retail space and a great, three-story-high banking hall, richly decorated in Art Deco ornament and substantially intact.⁴⁰

Complete with a crown of projecting vertical finials, the Gulf Building represents a blend of Gothic and Art Deco architectural influences.⁴¹

Unlike the other two, the 21-story Petroleum Building is the shortest of the three, and uniquely sited as the only high-rise building on the block providing nearly unobstructed views of all elevations of this building. While the Gulf Building is by far a more elaborate representation of Art Deco, the Petroleum Building was the first and only stepped-back Houston skyscraper with Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival-inspired ornamentation, informed by Bossom's recent travels to Central America. An even greater testament to Cullinan's success, it was also the first known skyscraper with an original integrated above-ground parking garage. As traffic congestion and parking became more of an issue in downtown in the 1920s, this was definitely a luxury.

³⁵ Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory*, 283-286.

³⁶ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 217.

³⁷ Stephen Fox, "Scraping the Houston Sky: 1894-1976," *Cite*, Spring-Summer 1984, 10-12.

³⁸ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 217-220.

³⁹ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 140; Jamie Lofgren, "Texas Skyscrapers in the 1920s," *Texas Architect*, Vol. 38 No. 2, (March-April 1988): 22-27; John Pastier, *The Cardboard Skyscrapers of Texas: Postcard Views of the State's First Generation of Tall Buildings*, *Texas Architect*, Vol. 32 No. 3, (May-June 1982): 55-57; Stephen Fox, "Scraping the Houston Sky: 1894-1976," *Cite*, (Spring-Summer 1984): 10-11.

⁴⁰ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 227-228.

⁴¹ Sally S. Victor, "Gulf Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1983; Jamie Lofgren, "Texas Skyscrapers in the 1920s," *Texas Architect*, Vol. 38 No. 2, (March-April 1988): 23-27; Stephen Fox, "Scraping the Houston Sky: 1894-1976," *Cite*, (Spring-Summer 1984): 10-11.

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Alfred C. Bossom (1881 – 1965)

Alfred C. Bossom was born in London, England on October 16, 1881. Trained in architecture at the Royal Academy of Arts, Bossom migrated to the United States in 1903 to design for Carnegie Steel Mills in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was only supposed to remain briefly in the United States but additional projects and his marriage to Emily Bayne in 1910 solidified his stay. Emily's father, Samuel Bayne, was the President of The Seaboard National Bank of New York, which provided immediate opportunities for Bossom as a bank architect. Several bank projects resulted from this business relationship with his father-in-law, and his first skyscraper was the 1912 First National Bank Building in Richmond, Virginia.⁴² He was undoubtedly impacted by the skyscraper designs in New York City in the 1910s and 1920s. Living and practicing in New York City, he became an extensive writer and theorist on a quest for what he described as uniquely American style of architecture, and he saw skyscrapers as the vehicle for this.

As mentioned previously, the 1915 Equitable Building in New York City provided the impetus for New York Zoning Law of 1916. The Equitable Building heavily influenced Bossom's first Texas project—the 1922 Magnolia Building (NRHP 1978) designed for the Magnolia Petroleum Company in downtown Dallas. Reflecting the hallmarks of Beaux Arts classicism, the 29-story limestone-clad Magnolia Building was symmetrical with the familiar 3-part vertical block arrangement. It featured a U-shaped plan, two towers with a central recessed light well bridged by a segmental arch at the 17th floor, and a penthouse at the rear.⁴³

By the early 1920s, Bossom established himself as a well-respected professional. The Magnolia Building in Dallas and the Seaboard National Bank in New York City, built the same year, raised his profile as an architect which led to additional projects in the South, and notably Texas. During this period he became especially well known for skyscrapers, which he is credited for introducing in the South. While he was not particularly innovative with the skyscraper form, it was the ornamentation in his designs that was most remarkable. Well informed on the architectural debates about the setback formula, he drew on several distinct sources of inspiration for the design of the Petroleum Building in Houston.⁴⁴

In addition to being heavily influenced by skyscraper design in New York City and Chicago, Bossom was also inspired by a trip he took in the mid-1920s. Prior to the Petroleum Building commission, Bossom visited Mexico and other parts of Central America on his quest to develop the American style of architecture.⁴⁵ He was inspired by much of what he saw. Bossom decided that the Mayan temples, specifically the Tikal Temple in Guatemala, were the perfect inspiration for the new American skyscrapers. He even documented his travels in his 1924 publication titled *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, which included abundant drawings and photographs of the Spanish Colonial architecture he encountered (Figures 19-21).⁴⁶

The final source of inspiration that shaped Bossom's design for the Petroleum Building was the Paris Exposition of 1925. Promoted through the exposition, Art Deco spread quickly and was embraced by as a new style by Bossom and many of his contemporaries.⁴⁷ According to Bevis Hillier, Art Deco was a “decorative response to modernity. This definition recognizes two tendencies within Art Deco: the desire to be modern, and the desire to be decorative.

⁴² Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926* (London: Book Art, 1984), 17-19, 56.

⁴³ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 139-140; Joe Williams and Danny Hardy, “Magnolia Building, Dallas, Dallas County, Texas,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1978, page 7-1 to 7-3, page 8-2 to 8-5.

⁴⁴ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 17-26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 28-30.

⁴⁶ Alfred C. Bossom, *Old Mexico: An Architectural Pilgrimage*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924); Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory*, 287.

⁴⁷ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 32, 44-46.

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It also encourages us to examine the direct antecedents of the Art Deco on display in Paris in 1925, which in reality represented only the latest in a series of decorative responses to modernity.”⁴⁸ Art Deco became a replacement for historical styles which had a heavy emphasis on the decorative arts. As a new hybrid, it represented a new reliance on modern forms, like the skyscraper, while still applying some restrained decoration. In some cases, like the Petroleum Building, indigenous-inspired decoration was applied to the sculptural Art Deco form.⁴⁹

Uniquely American Style of Architecture

Bossom’s search for a uniquely American style of architecture was deeply rooted in his Pan-Americanist ideals. For an educated British national like Bossom who came of age at the height of the British Empire, exposure to indigenous American art through popular literature, world fairs, photographs of archaeological discoveries, and cultural institutions, was quite common by the 1920s.⁵⁰ The blend of indigenous and Spanish influences impressed Bossom on his travels to Mexico.⁵¹ Profoundly inspired by the art and Spanish Colonial architecture he witnessed, he wrote:

To the people of the United States, Mexico is logically a far greater source of influence than has yet been realized or will be until journeys are made to its ancient fanes. The American architect and the American artist may find much there to kindle their imaginations and inspire their efforts, and the layman also can discover much indeed by making Mexico an inspirational and artistic Mecca.⁵²

Consequently, Bossom was among the first architects to turn to the Mayan Indians of the Yucatan for design inspiration. The Petroleum Building was an opportunity to experiment with his theories on the stepped-back skyscraper in order to create something he believed was distinctly American.⁵³

While Bossom’s approach was never officially adopted or defined as an American style, he was somewhat successful in his endeavor, and the Petroleum Building became the first and only stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper in Houston with Spanish Colonial Revival and Mayan-inspired ornamentation. Drawing from his visit to the ancient Mayan pyramid of Tikal in Guatemala and travels throughout Mexico, Bossom designed a 21-story skyscraper or “recessional tower” stepped at the 17th, 19th, and 21st floors.⁵⁴ The design retained the traditional three-part vertical block arrangement but embodied a sculpted Art Deco form. Recessed spandrels, and the application of elaborate cast stone relief in the form of chevrons and metal interior features were all trademarks of Art Deco Bossom deemed appropriate to include in the design. The use of arches, balconies, tile roofing, finial-like caps, and an elaborated chimney top (removed) gave the building a Spanish Colonial Revival character.⁵⁵ Other eclectic ornament featured flower and bird motifs, and Mayan-inspired detailing such as medallions and masks concentrated

⁴⁸ Bevis Hillier and Stephen Escritt, *Art Deco Style*, (Phaidon Press, 1997), 38.

⁴⁹ Carol Willis, “Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, No 1 (March 1986): 57.

⁵⁰ Ruth Anne Phillips, “Pre-Columbian Revival: Defining and Exploring a U.S. Architectural Style, 1910-1940,” (Dissertation, The City University of New York, 2007), 16-18, 126-152.

⁵¹ Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, ix, x.

⁵² *Ibid*, x.

⁵³ Alfred Bossom, “America’s National Architecture,” *American Architect*, Vol. 128, (July 29, 1925): 77-83 in Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom’s American Architecture 1903-1926*, 86-89; Ruth Anne Phillips, “Pre-Columbian Revival: Defining and Exploring a U.S. Architectural Style, 1910-1940,” (Dissertation, The City University of New York, 2007), 126-152, 225; “Used Mayan Indian Designs on American Skyscrapers: A. C. Bossom, Noted Architect Runs for Parliament,” *The Times (Munster, Indiana)*, October 29, 1928.

⁵⁴ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom’s American Architecture 1903-1926*, 32; Alfred Bossom, “Fifty Years’ Toward an American Style in Architecture,” *American Architect*, Vol. 129 No 2488, (January 5, 1926): 43-49 in Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom’s American Architecture 1903-1926*, 90-93.

⁵⁵ Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, 6, 8-9; Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 225-228.

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at the capital.⁵⁶ Ultimately, the Petroleum Building represented a hybrid modernistic and Regional Eclectic design.⁵⁷

Other 20th century architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, also used Pre-Columbian motifs in their building designs. Pre-Columbian decoration was applied to houses, office buildings, and especially skyscrapers and movie theaters in an eclectic manner. While not as extravagant as other Art Deco examples with Pre-Columbian ornament in the United States, the Petroleum Building stood out in Houston as the only skyscraper of its kind. The degree of accuracy Bossom employed in replicating Pre-Columbian artwork and other forms is unknown, but cultural appropriation by architects at the time was common.⁵⁸

Departure to England

Several of Bossom's American commissions came from big players in the oil industry, the Petroleum Building included. The building was designed as a viable commercial skyscraper and as a "placard of prosperity and success" to represent the power of American Republics Corporation and its executives. It symbolized the prominence of the oil industry in Texas and helped to shape Houston's modern skyline.⁵⁹ The Petroleum Building was Bossom's last American skyscraper design thus representing the culmination of his career in the United States. The building wasn't even completed when he departed.

In 1926, Alfred Bossom returned to England after 23 years of work in the United States. His extensive American portfolio included 50 of the nation's largest skyscrapers, other commercial buildings, and a handful of residences.⁶⁰ These skyscrapers include the 1922 Seaboard National Bank in New York City (demolished), the 1921 Hibernia Bank Building in New Orleans, the 1922 First National Bank building in Jersey City, and the 1925 Liberty Bank Building in Buffalo. Upon his departure, he did not see the skyscraper movement making its way to England and Europe, and believed that the skyscraper would remain an American phenomenon. He followed up on his earlier ideas in his 1934 work, *Building to the Skies: the Romance of the Skyscraper*, in which he identified the Mayan Temple of Tikal as the original American skyscraper.⁶¹

Bossom left the field of architecture upon his return to England and instead turned to public service. He served as a member of the House of Commons in the British Parliament from 1931 until 1959 when he retired. He was awarded a baronetcy in 1953 and was created a life peer as Baron Bossom in 1960.⁶² Bossom passed away in 1965.⁶³

⁵⁶ Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, 235; Stephen Fox, *AIA Houston Architectural Guide*. (Houston: American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, 1999), 28.

⁵⁷ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945*, 178.

⁵⁸ Ruth Anne Phillips, "Pre-Columbian Revival: Defining and Exploring a U.S. Architectural Style, 1910-1940," 18-21, 168-171.

⁵⁹ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 26; Alfred C. Bossom, "Bankers and the Fine Arts: Exemplifying Banks' Ideals in Their Buildings Furniture and Equipment Can Help Artistic Furnishing a Good Investment," *Bankers' Magazine (1896-1943)*, Vol. 112, Iss. 2, (February 1926): 296; Carol Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, No 1 (March 1986): 54.

⁶⁰ For a complete list of Bossom's American projects, see Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 48-56.

⁶¹ Alfred C. Bossom, *Building to the Skies: The Romance of the Skyscraper*. (New York: The Studio Publications, 1934); Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 30.

⁶² *The London Gazette*, "Home Office," February 2, 1960, p. 858.

⁶³ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 13-16.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Bossom's projects in Texas include:⁶⁴

- 1918 - American Exchange National Bank, Dallas, Texas (with associate architects Lang and Witchell)
- 1922 - Magnolia Petroleum Building, Dallas, Texas
- 1924-1925 – Maple Terrace Apartments, Dallas, Texas (with associate architects Thomson and Swaine)
- 1924-1925 – Adolphus III, alterations to the Adolphus Hotel, Dallas, Texas (with associate architects Thomson and Swaine)
- 1925-1926 – The Petroleum Building, Houston, Texas (with associate architects Briscoe, Dixon, and Sullivan)
- 1926 – Goodhue Building, Beaumont, Texas (unbuilt)
- 1927-1928 – San Jacinto Trust Company, Houston, Texas (consultant to architect Joseph W. Northrop, demolished)
- House for A. L. Kramer, Dallas, Texas (unknown build date)
- Auditorium for City of Dallas, Dallas, Texas (unbuilt)
- School of Diplomacy (intended location unknown, unbuilt)

Summary

The Petroleum Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The building was constructed between 1925 and 1927 at the request of major oilman Joseph S. Cullinan to house a variety of oil companies, all of which operated under the umbrella of the American Republics Corporation. Between 1927 and 1956, the building was directly associated with commercial growth in downtown Houston generated by the early 20th century Texas oil boom. The Petroleum Building was designed by prolific New York-based architect Alfred C. Bossom with Houston-based associate architects Maurice Sullivan and Briscoe & Dixon. It is significant as the first and only stepped-back Art Deco skyscraper with Mayan-inspired and Spanish Colonial Revival detailing and an original integrated above-ground parking garage in Houston. The building was the Bossom's last commission before his return to England and the remarkable design represents the culmination of his career in the United States. This property is also Bossom's only extant work in the city of Houston.

⁶⁴ Dennis Sharp, ed., *Alfred C. Bossom's American Architecture 1903-1926*, 52.

Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Maps

Map 1: Petroleum Building, 1314 Texas Avenue, Houston, Texas





Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 2: Google Earth Map, Accessed April 16, 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 3: Scaled Google Earth depicts the approximate boundary of the nominated property.

-  Petroleum Building
-  Approximate Boundary of nominated property



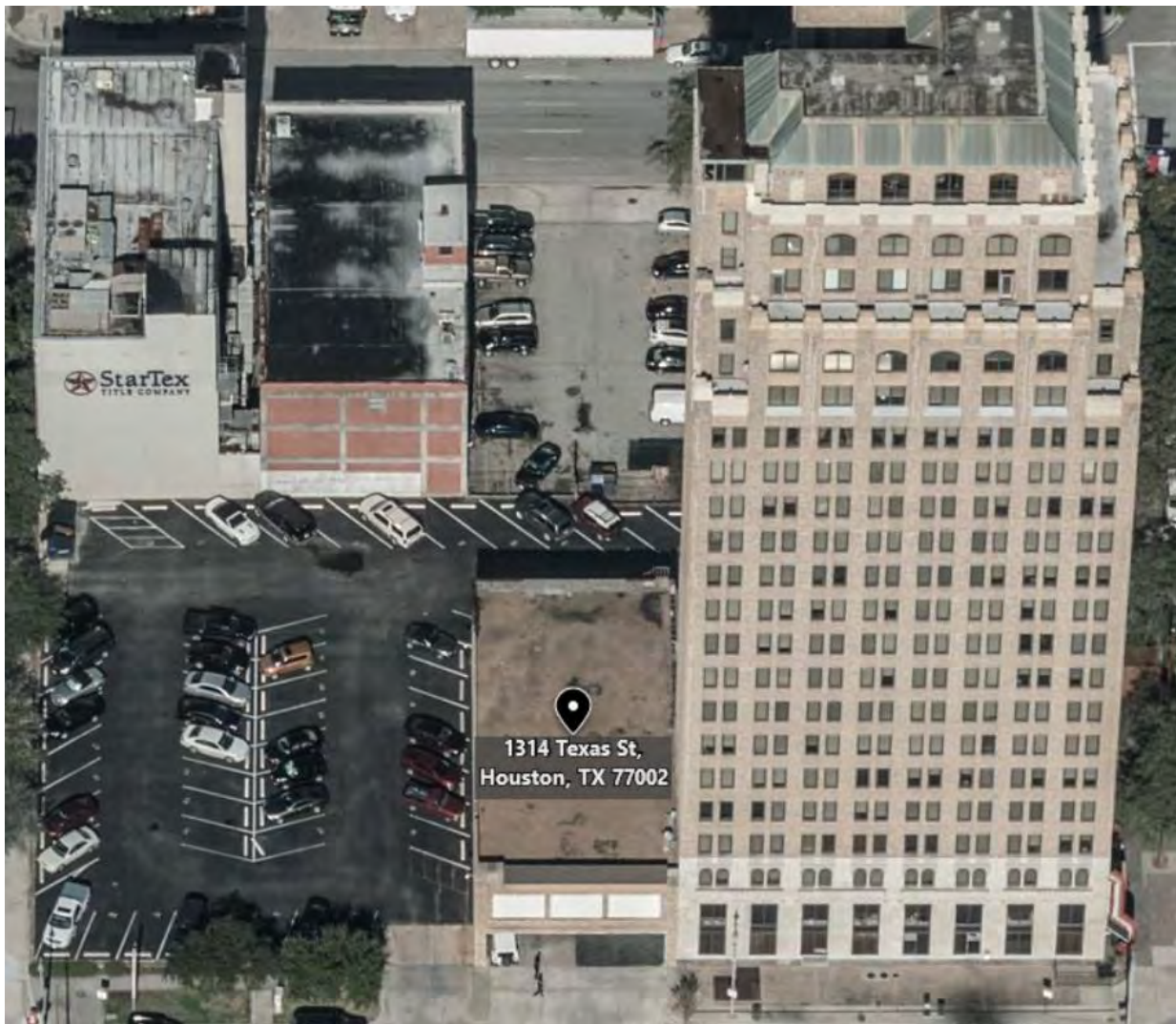
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 4: North Elevation, Bing Map, Accessed October 30, 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 5: East Elevation, Bing Map, Accessed October 30, 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 6: South Elevation, Bing Map, Accessed October 30, 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

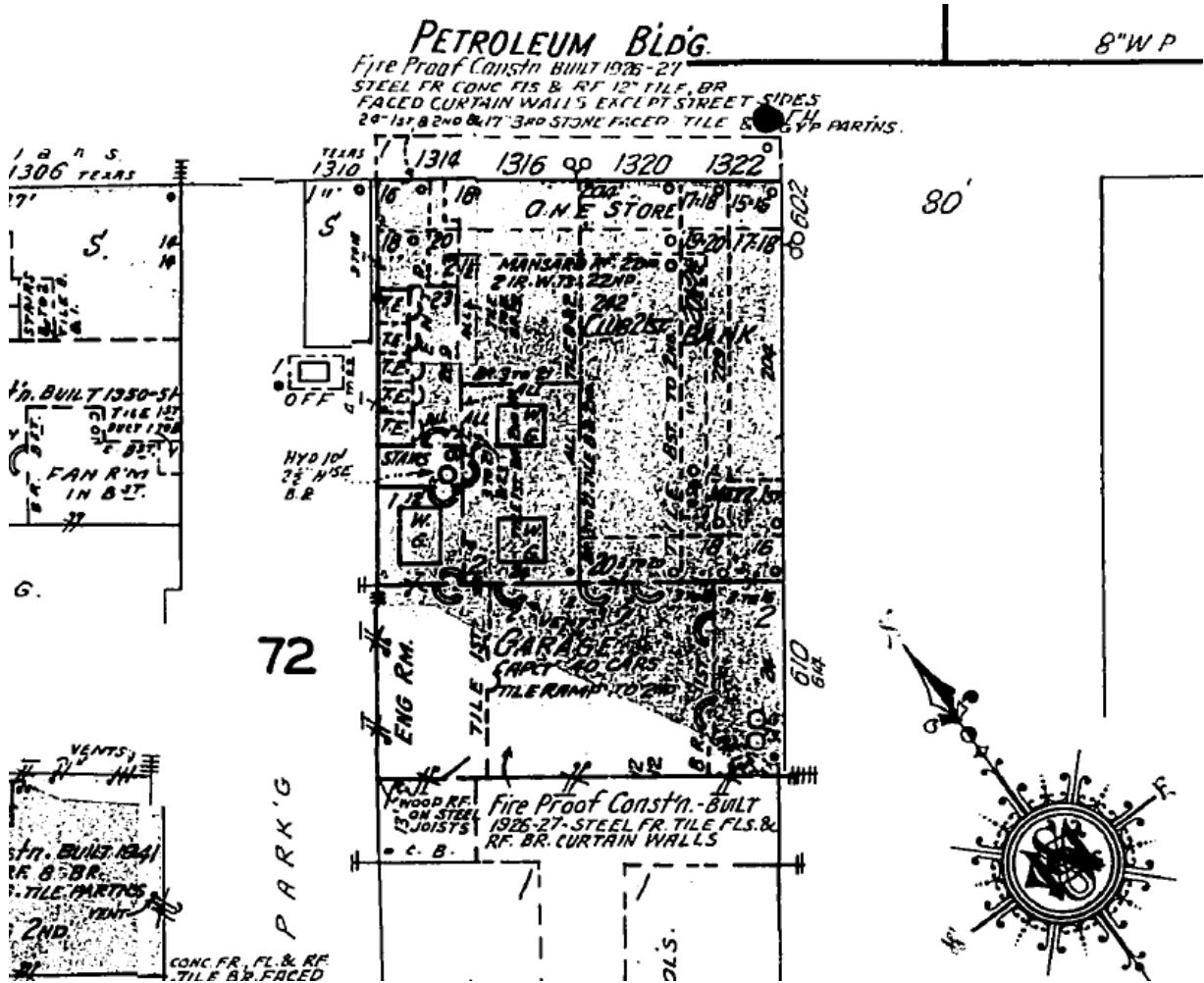
Map 7: West Elevation, Bing Map, October 30, 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figures

Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Houston 1924-Feb. 1951 vol. 1, 1924-Dec. 1950, Sheet 17



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2: Historic photo, 1928, camera facing west; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 3: Historic photo, 1928, camera facing southeast; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 4: Original rendering showing primary elevation, unknown date; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 5: Petroleum Building, 1930, view northwest; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 6: Petroleum Building, 1972, camera facing west; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 7: Postcard, circa 1927, view northwest; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



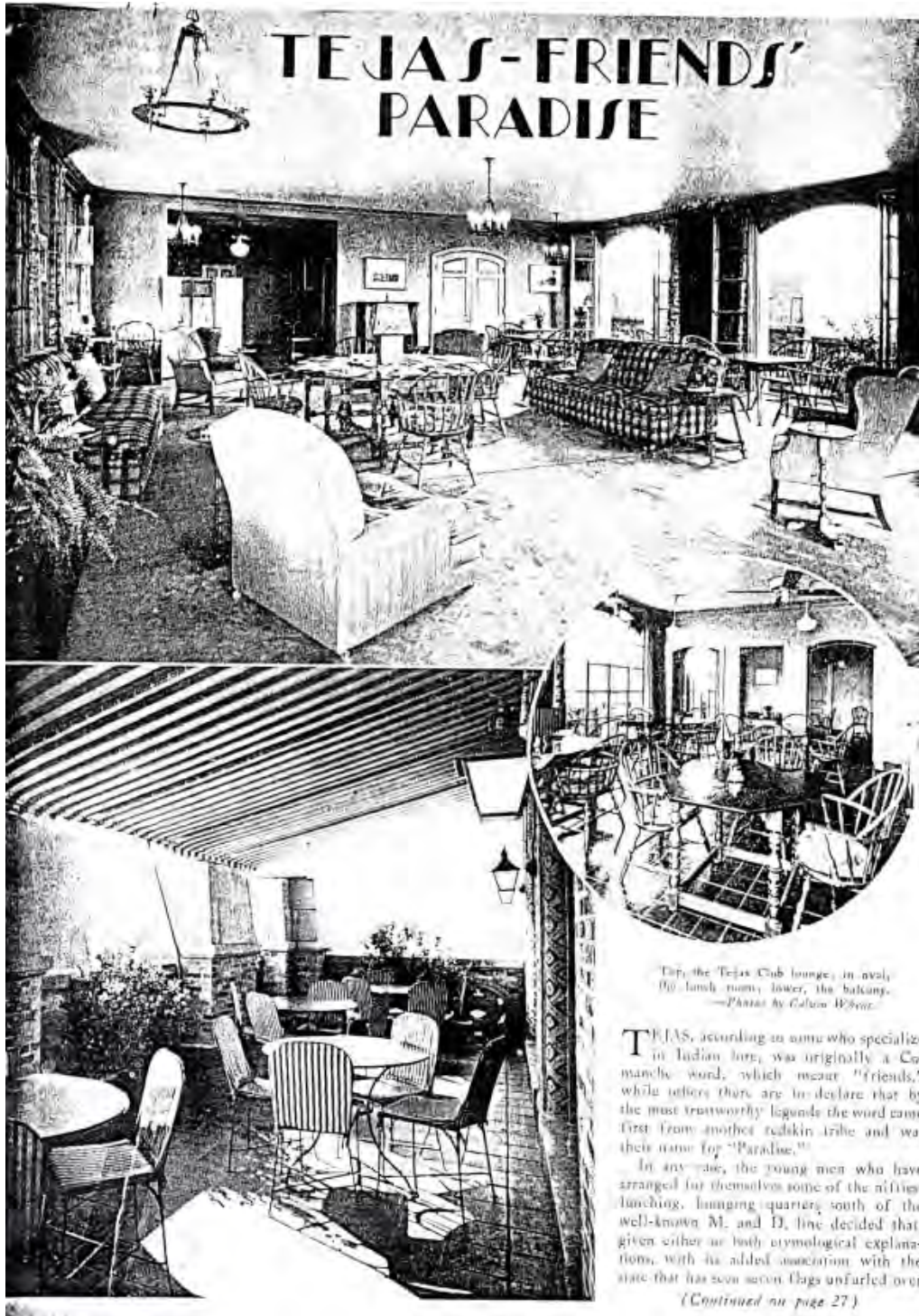
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 8: Postcard, circa 1930s, view southwest; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



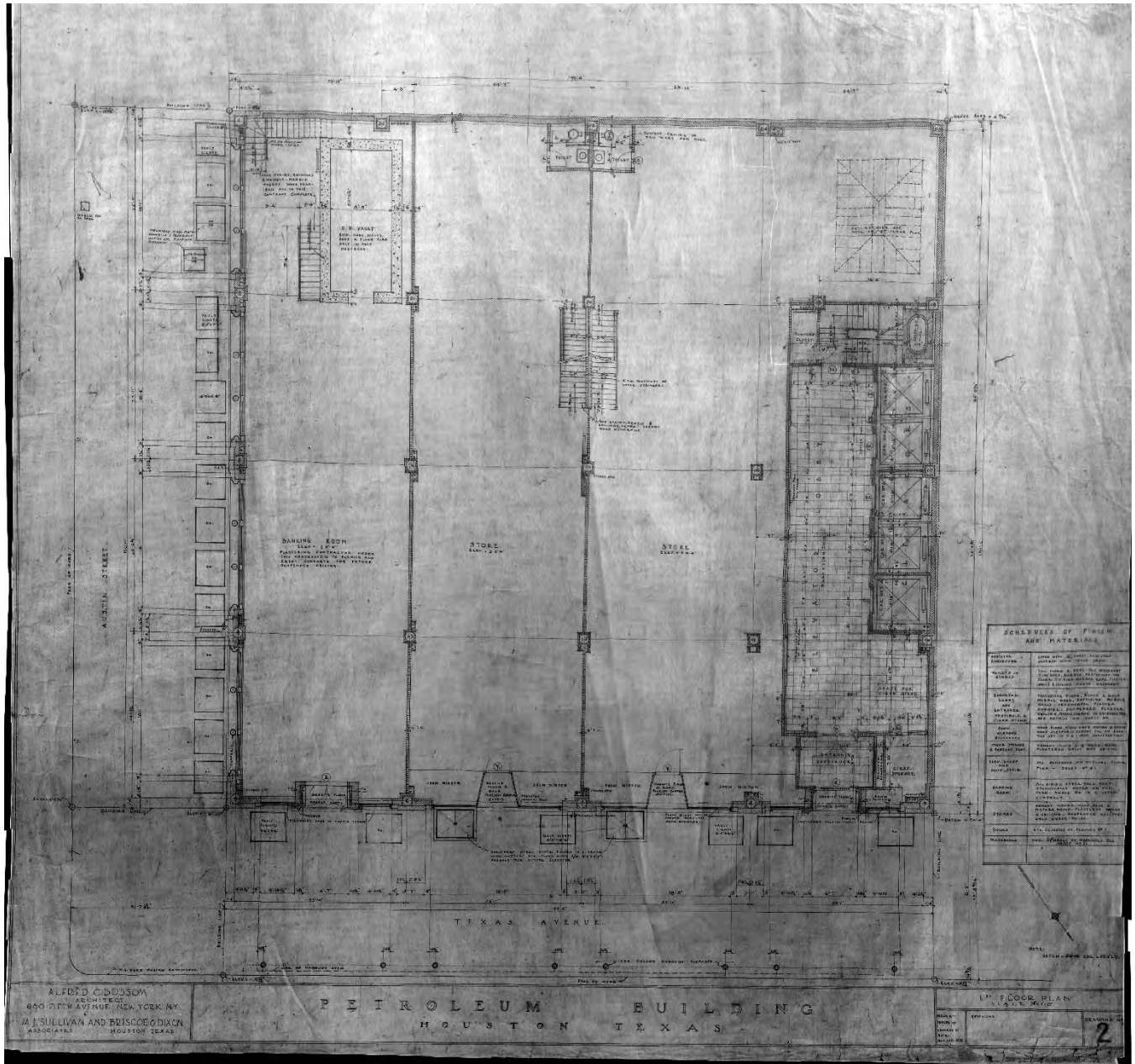
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 9: Tejas Club, *The Houston Gargoyle*, October 6, 1929



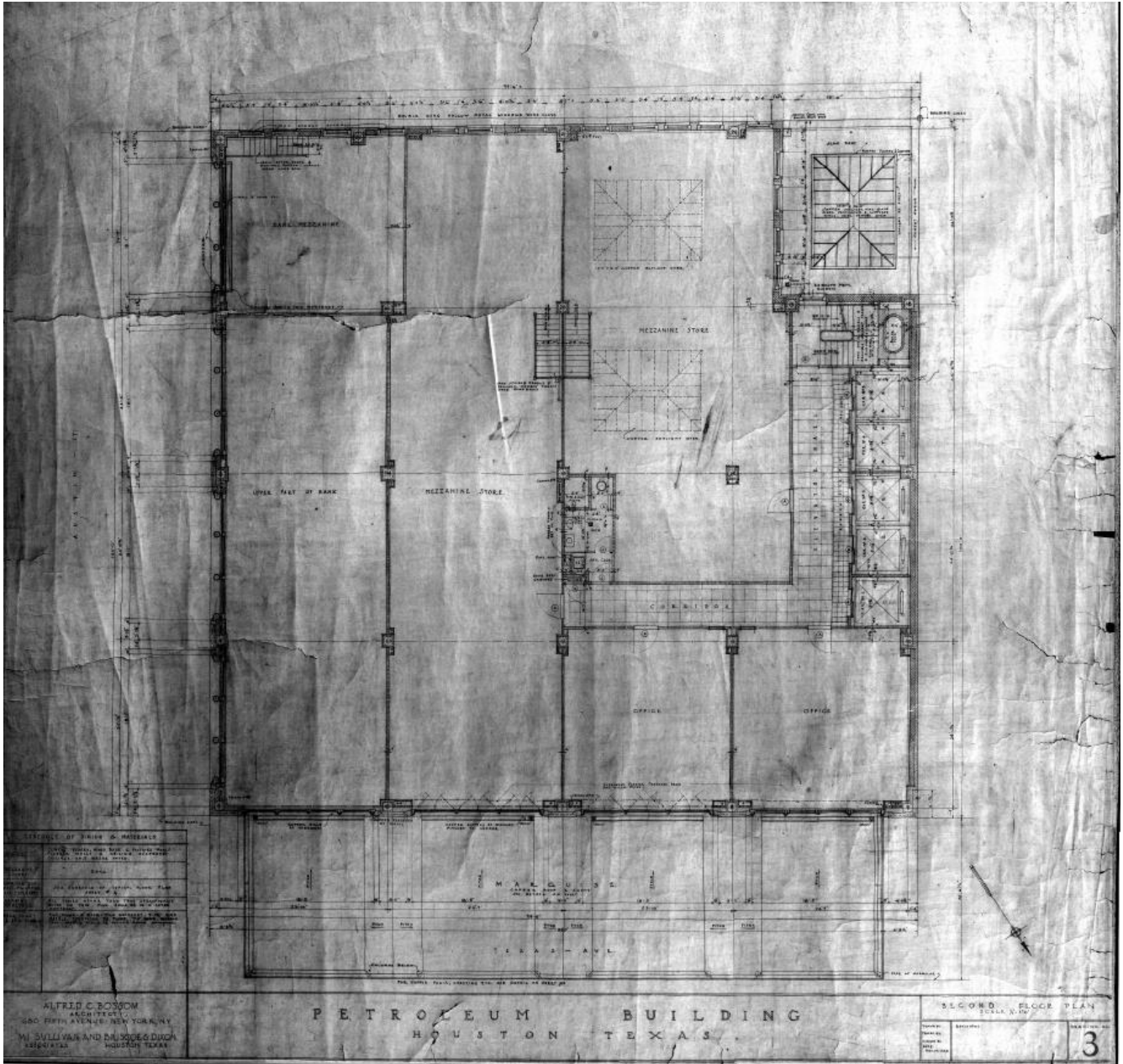
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 10: First Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



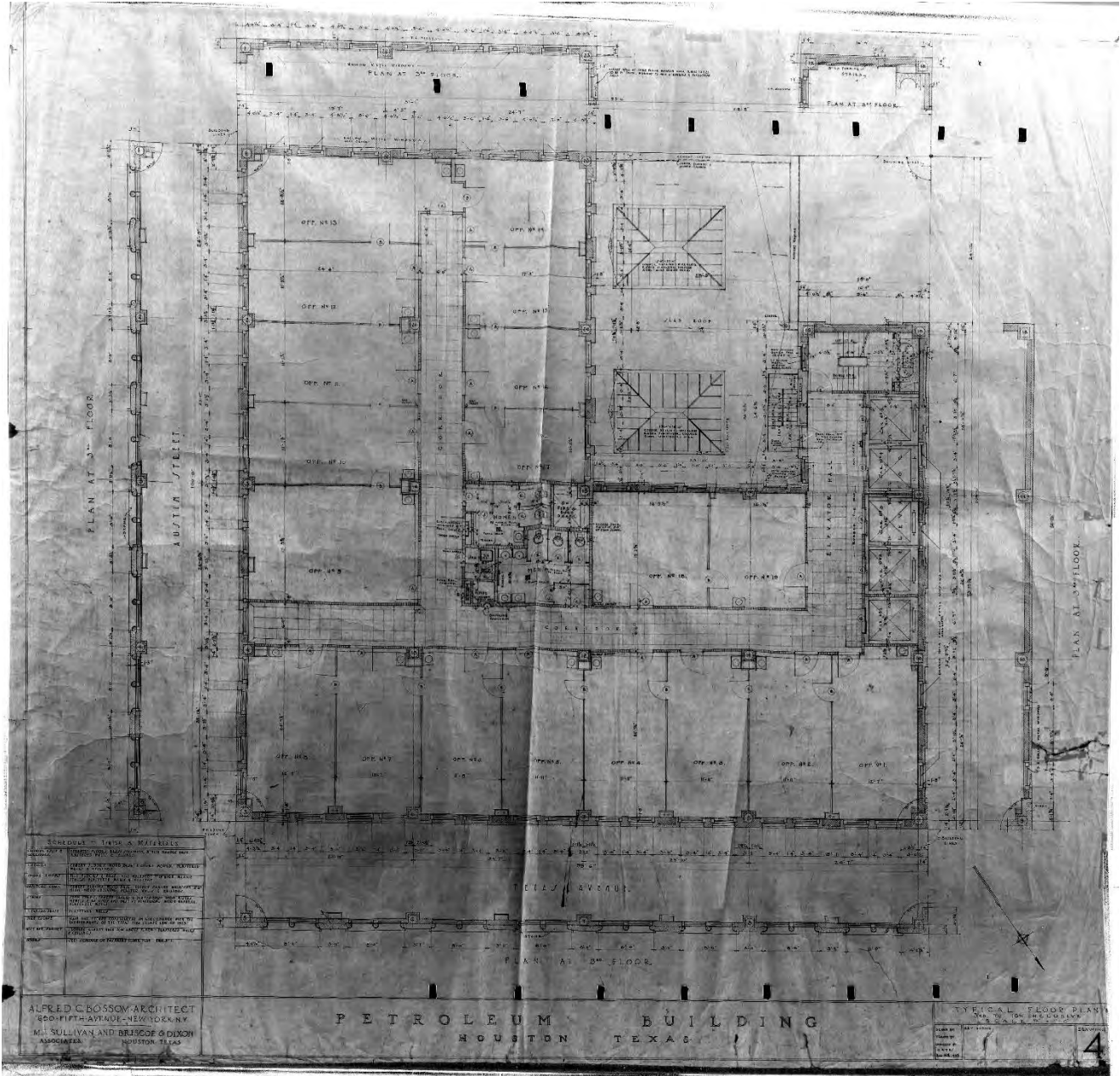
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 11: Second Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



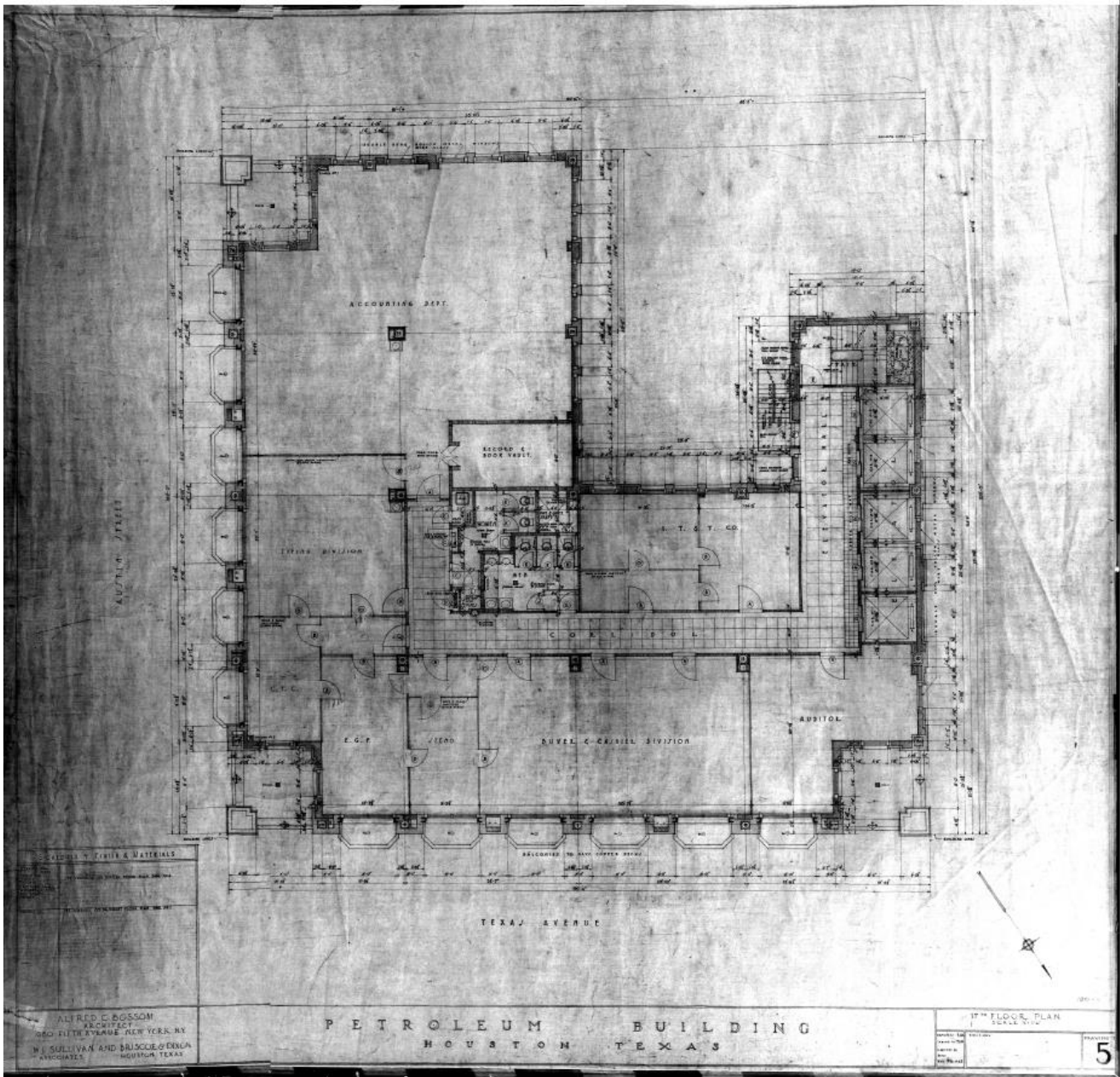
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 12: Third – Sixteenth Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



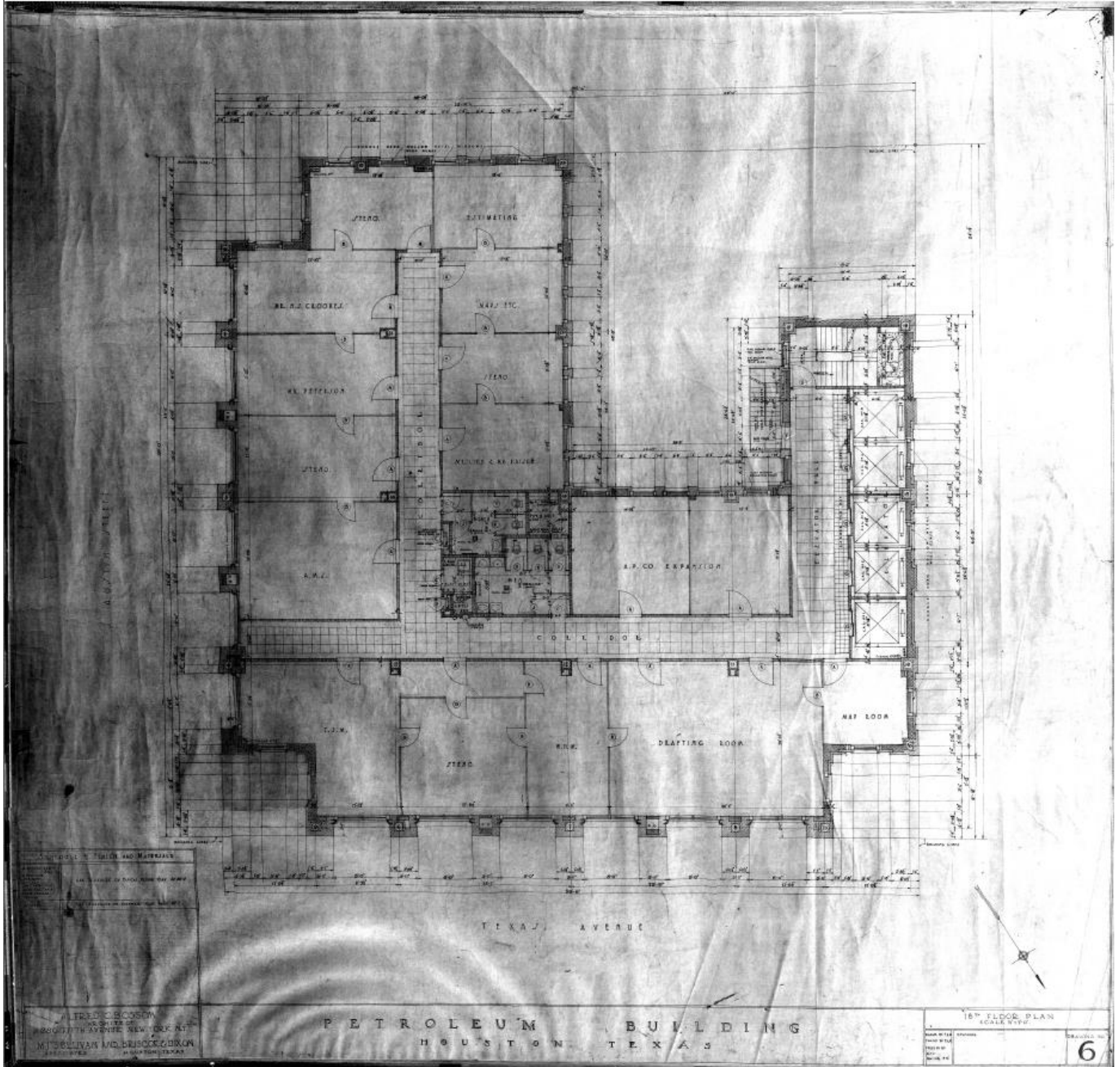
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 13: Seventeenth Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



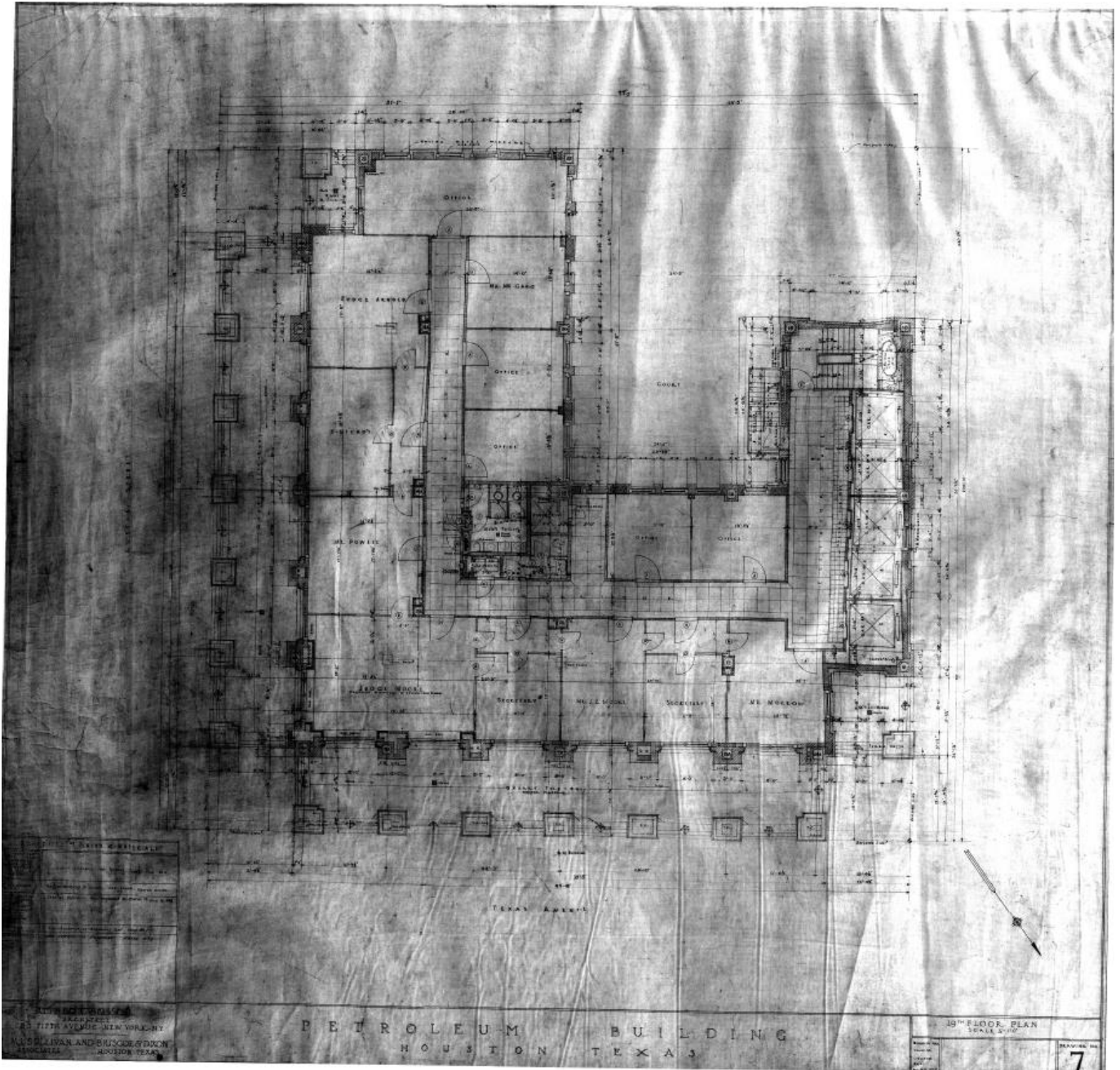
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 14: Eighteenth Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



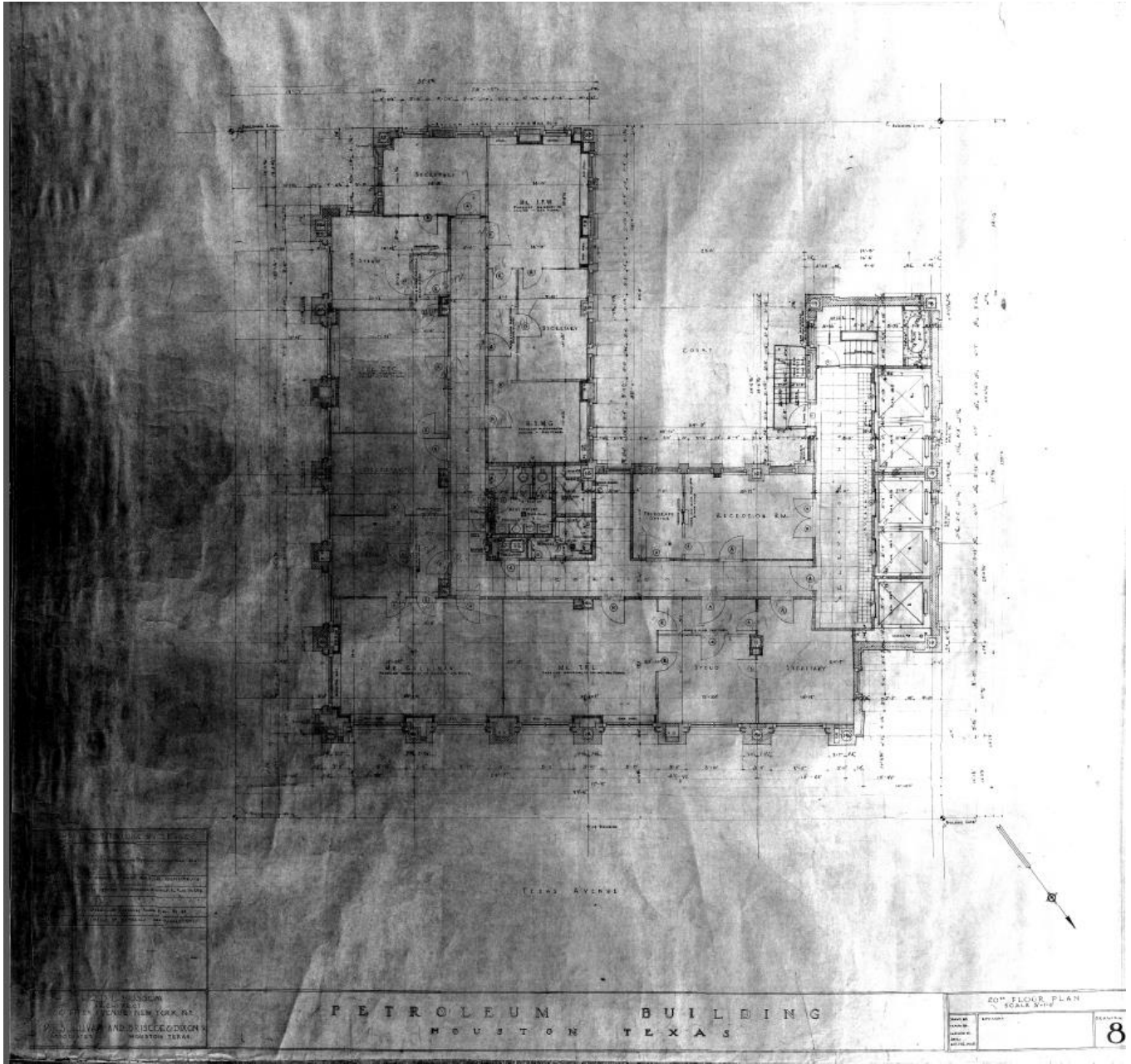
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 15: Nineteenth Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



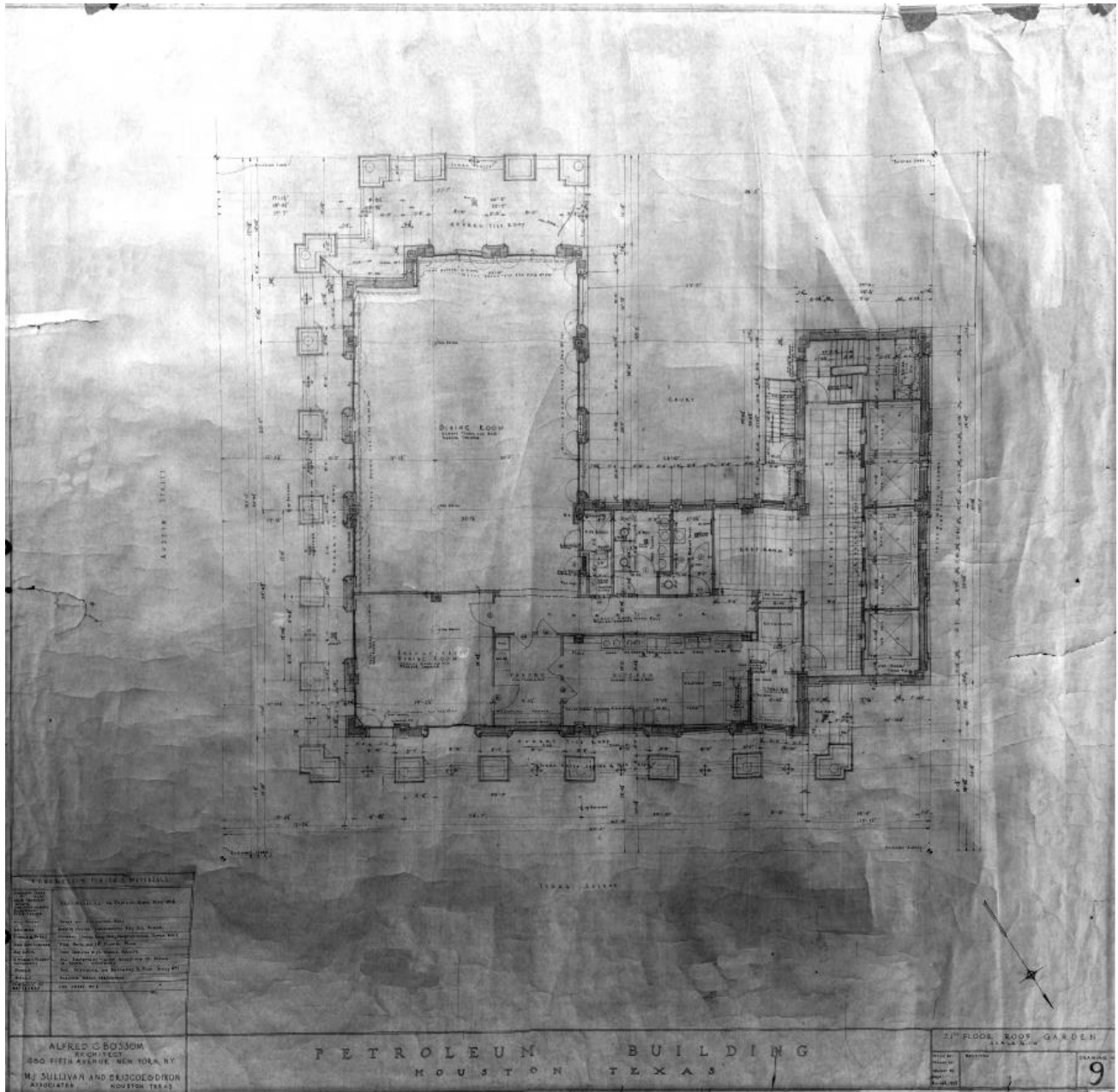
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 16: Twentieth Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



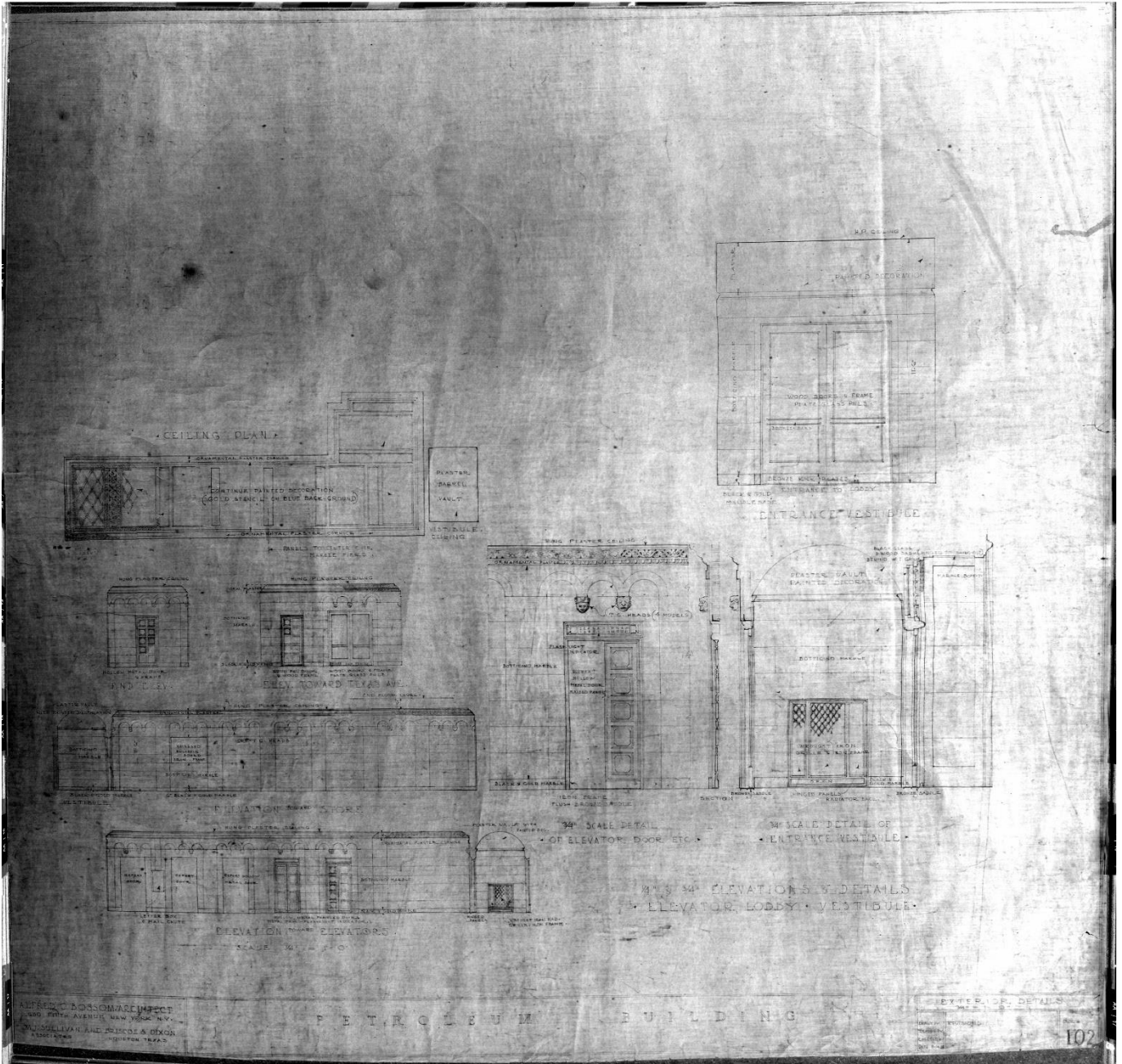
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 17: Twenty-First Floor Plan, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



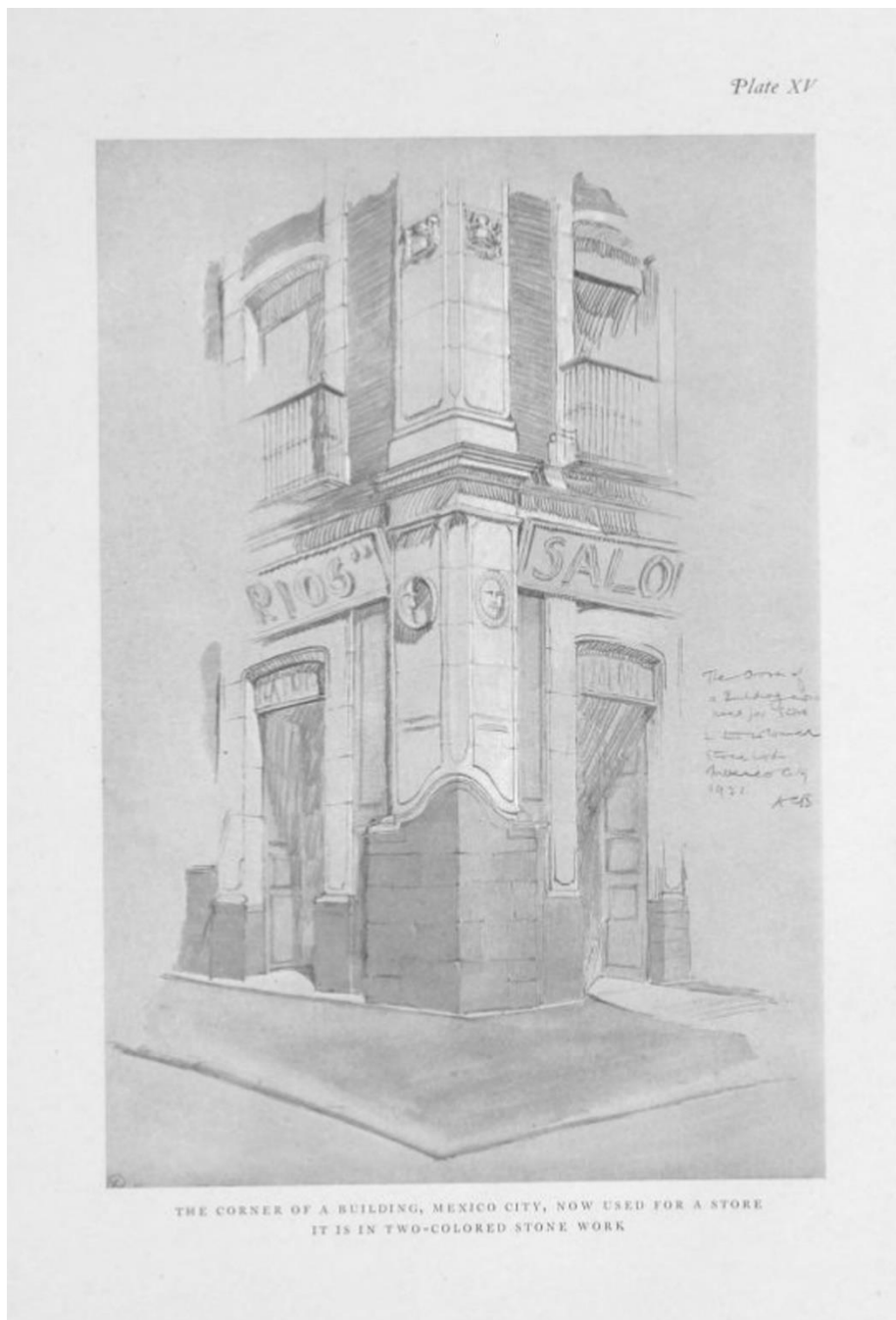
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 18: Ground Floor Elevator Lobby Elevations, November 14, 1925; Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



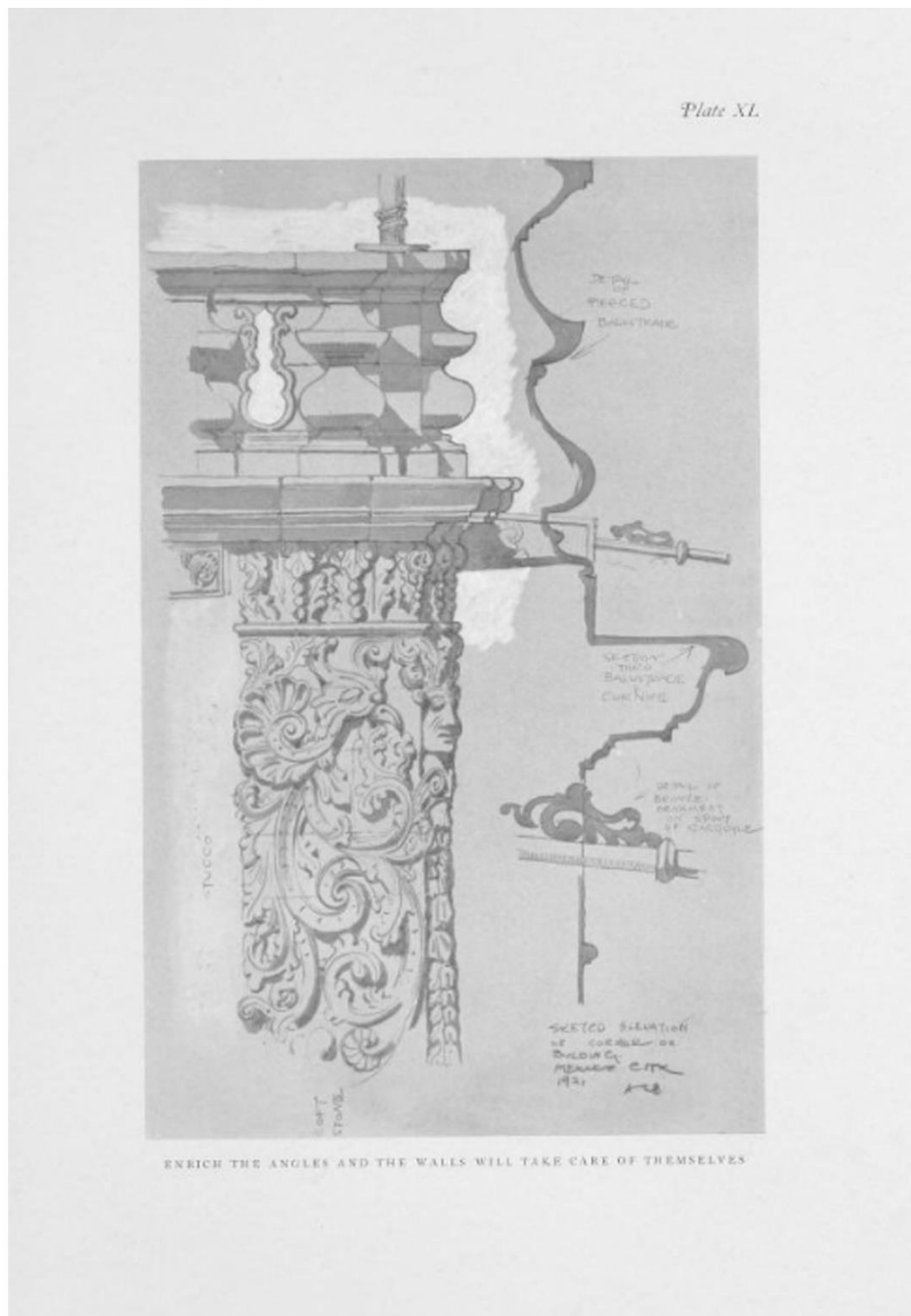
Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 19: Plate XV, Alfred C. Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, 1924.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 20: Plate XL, Alfred C. Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, 1924.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 21: Plate XLIX, Alfred C. Bossom, *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico*, 1924.



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photos

Photo 1:

North (primary) and east elevations

Camera facing southwest

Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 2:
North (primary) and east elevations
Camera facing southwest
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 3:
East elevation
Camera facing north
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 4:
East elevation of attached 2-level garage
Camera facing northwest
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 5:
South elevation
Camera facing north
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 6:
South elevation
Camera facing north
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 7:
West and south elevations
Camera facing northeast
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 8:
West and south elevations of parking garage
Camera facing northeast
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 9:
North (primary) and east elevations
Camera facing southwest
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 10:
North elevation showing main entrance
Camera facing south
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 11:
North elevation showing main entrance
Camera facing south
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 12:
Exterior view of 21st floor typical terra cotta detailing and copper roof
Camera facing south
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 13:
Exterior view of 21st floor typical terra cotta detailing and copper roof
Camera facing east
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 14:
Exterior view of metal fire escape stair
Camera facing southeast
Date: 2018



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 15:
Exterior view of typical window and bulkhead at stepped roof areas levels 17, 19, and 21
Camera facing northeast
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 16:
Exterior view of typical window at levels 17, 19, and 21
Camera facing north
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 17:
Exterior view of typical window at levels 17, 19, and 21
Camera facing north
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 18:
Exterior view of typical terra cotta detailing at parapet
Camera facing north
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 19:
Exterior view of typical terra cotta and masonry detailing
Camera facing west
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 20:
View within ground floor elevator lobby of main entry
Camera facing north
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 21:
View within ground floor elevator lobby
Camera facing south
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 22:
View within ground floor elevator lobby
Camera facing north
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 23:
View within ground floor elevator lobby
Camera facing west
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 24:
View within ground floor elevator lobby of exit stair door
Camera facing south
Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 25:

Enlarged view of Mayan bronze detailing on ground floor elevator lobby doors

Camera facing south

Date: 2015



Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo 26:
Enlarged view of Mayan stone detailing within ground floor elevator lobby
Camera facing west
Date: 2015











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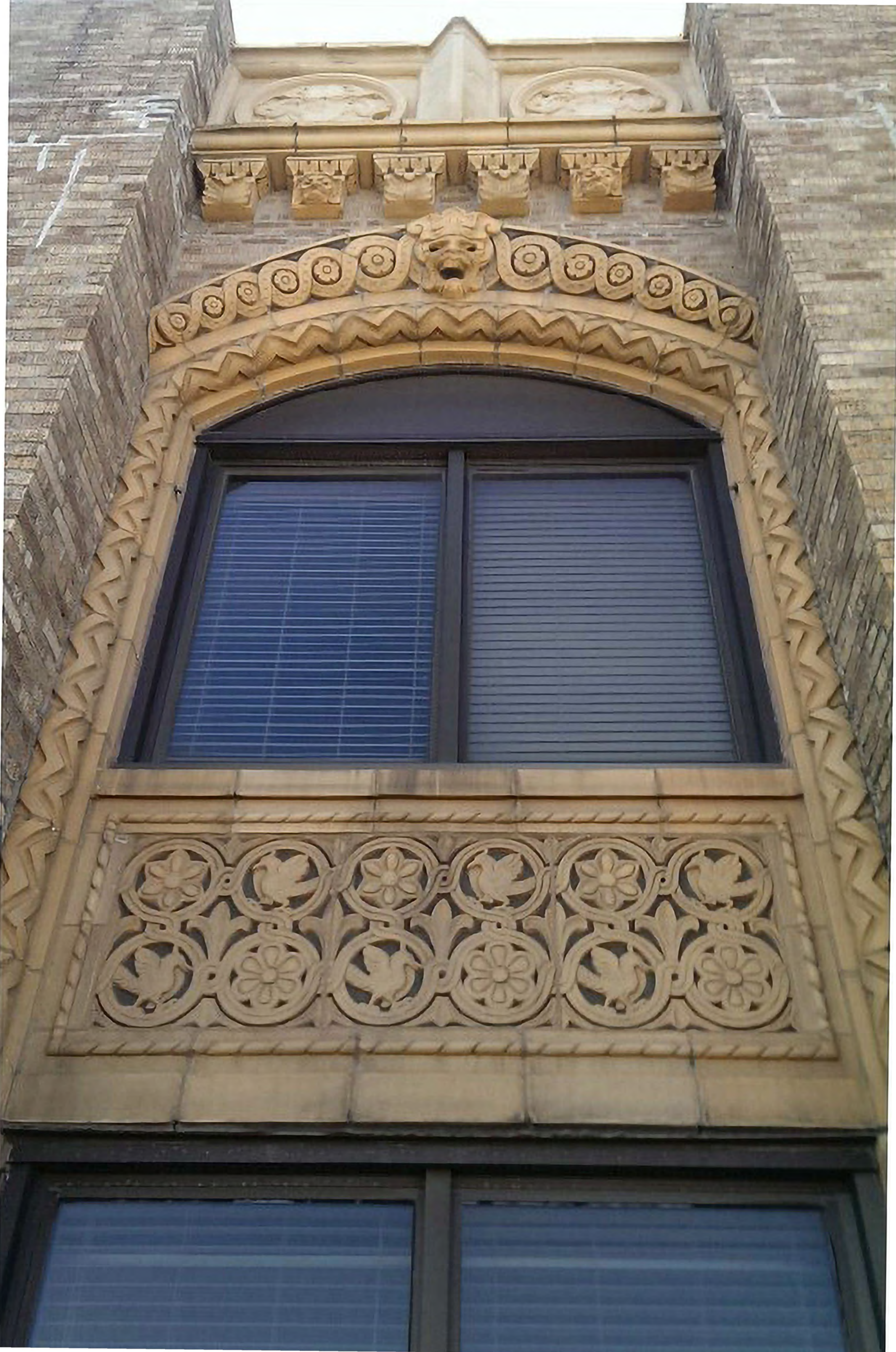












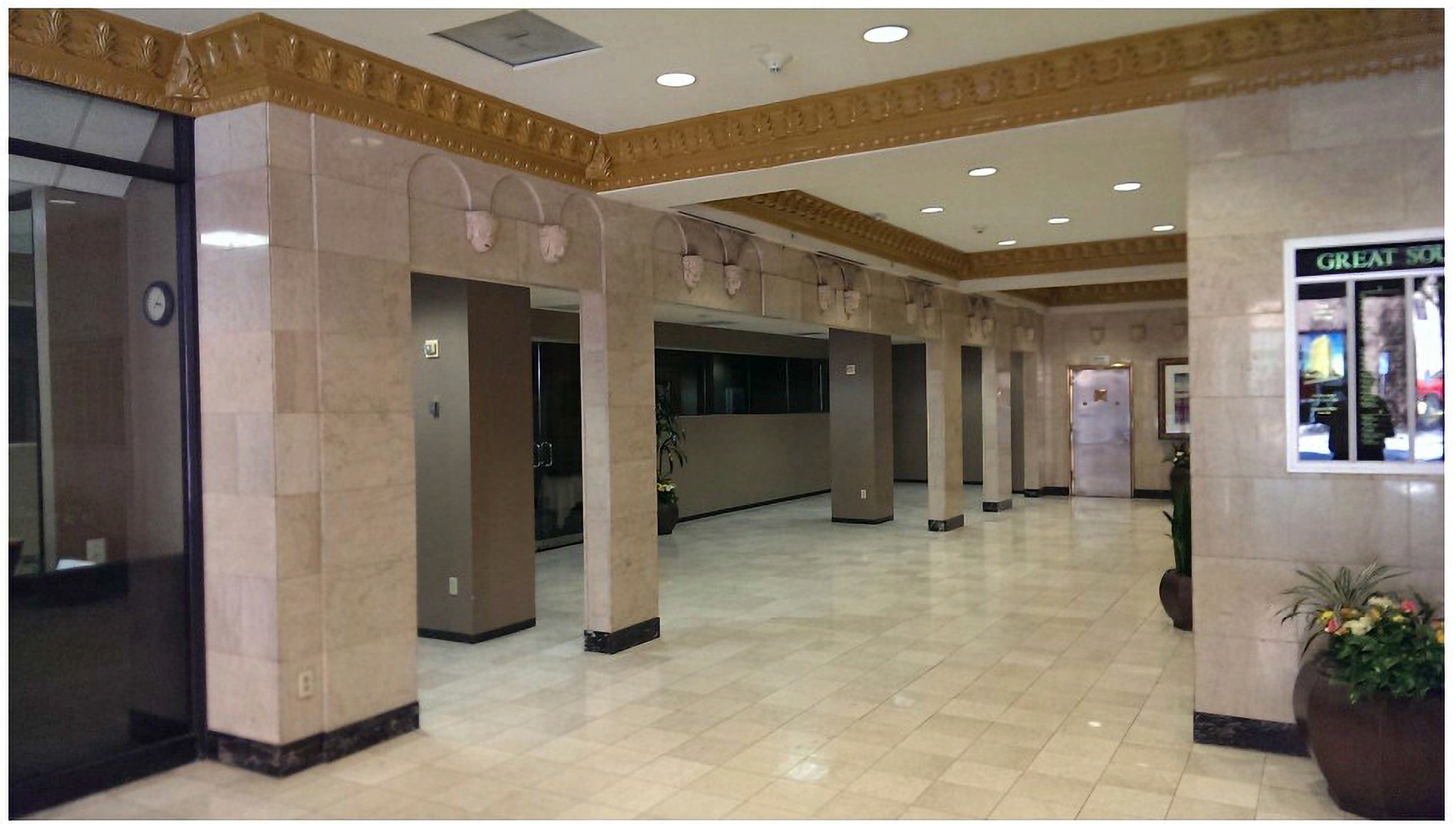


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1314 TEXAS



GARAGE







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Petroleum Building

Multiple Name:

State & County: TEXAS, Harris

Date Received: 6/27/2019 Date of Pending List: 7/19/2019 Date of 16th Day: 8/5/2019 Date of 45th Day: 8/12/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004250

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

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

Accept Return Reject 8/8/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Petroleum Building is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce and Architecture. Designed by noted New York architect Alfred C. Bossom, the building is an excellent local example of Art Deco skyscraper design, in this case decoratively detailed in stylized Mayan and Spanish Colonial Revival inspired motifs. The 21-story, steel and concrete frame building was constructed between 1925 and 1927 by businessman and oil entrepreneur Joseph Cullinan to house a variety of oil related companies and commercial operations. Construction of the prominent Houston skyscraper reflected a spate of oil related office building construction in the state as Texas emerged as a center of oil industry development during the early twentieth century with its most important center in Houston.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer: Paul Lusignan Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2229 Date: 8/8/2019

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

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



TO: Paul Lusignan
 National Register of Historic Places
 Mail Stop 7228
 1849 C St, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20240

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO
 Texas Historical Commission

RE: Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

DATE: June 24, 2019

The following materials are submitted:

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| X | Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Petroleum Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas |
| | Resubmitted nomination. |
| X | Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO. |
| | Multiple Property Documentation form on disk. |
| | Resubmitted form. |
| | Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO. |
| X | CD with TIFF photograph files, KMZ files, and nomination PDF |
| | Correspondence. |

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do___) (do not___) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

