

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name \_\_\_\_\_

other names/site Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building

2. Location

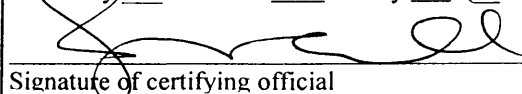
street & number One American Row not for publication N/A

city or town Hartford vicinity N/A

state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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  nationally  statewide  locally . (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 \_\_\_\_\_ November 10, 2004  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Jennifer Aniskovich, State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building**  
Name of Property

**Hartford, CT**  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the

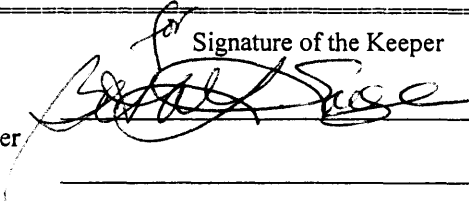
National Register

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



1-21-05

**5. Classification**

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

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

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

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

0

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Modernist

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls glass/steel

roof membrane

other limestone/marble

**Narrative Description**

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

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, Hartford, Hartford County, CT**

**Section 7 Page 1**

**Description**

The Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, which occupies most of the block between Columbus Boulevard, and State, Prospect and Grove streets (see site plan, Exhibit A), consists of a raised plaza with a 13-story glass tower that overlooks the Connecticut River Valley to the east and Hartford's downtown business district to the west (Photographs # 1-5). State Street, the gateway to the downtown, connects directly to interchanges for Interstate 91, an elevated highway along the river, and Founder's Bridge, one of three that provide access to the city. The Bulkeley Bridge three blocks to the north carries Interstate 84. About a mile to the south, State Routes 5 and 15 cross the Connecticut River on the Charter Oak Bridge to join I-84 in East Hartford.

Phoenix Plaza is connected to Constitution Plaza, a contemporaneous modern office, hotel, and shopping complex to the north, by a pedestrian bridge over State Street (see Exhibit B; Photograph #2). Later elevated foot bridges connect to Travelers Plaza on the south (1968), and the most recent, the 2001 Phoenix Gateway, extends over Columbus Boulevard to Riverfront Plaza on the east (Photographs #3, 4). There is a landscaped, street-level entrance court at the northwest corner, with two sets of stairs leading up to Phoenix Plaza from American Row and Statehouse Square. Among the nearby individual buildings are the Old Statehouse (1796) designed by Charles Bullfinch, situated diagonally across the square, Travelers Tower (1919) to the southwest, and the former Hartford Steam Boiler Insurance Company, located at the corner of Prospect and Grove streets.

The entire building, base, plaza, and tower, has a structural framework fabricated and erected by Bethlehem Steel Corporation (Exhibits C & D). The three levels of the nearly square base, or platform (180' x 200'), which was constructed with a flood wall on the east (river) side, contain underground parking garages, service rooms, offices, and the company vault. A fall-out shelter was included in the original plan. The plaza level, a reinforced concrete slab paved with tan brick, surrounds an interior sunken courtyard (Photographs #6, 7; Exhibit E). A modern chrome-plated sculpture by Roy L. Gussow (b.1918) provides a focal point for the courtyard reflecting pool (now empty), which is south and east of the tower base. Tempered glass and metal railings that define the perimeter of the plaza are repeated around the courtyard opening. Minimalist landscaping includes plantings along the perimeter promenades, concrete benches with exposed aggregate, and square and circular concrete planters for trees and shrubs.

Offices located under the plaza promenades have windows along the outside perimeter. The full-height glass walls that face inward towards the courtyard (Photograph #8) are capped by continuous concrete lintel faced with limestone, a material also used on the exposed perimeter of the tower at this level. An employee lounge and cafeteria, occupies most of the east end of the tower at grade level. The glass walls and doors of the cafeteria provide views of the courtyard, which can only be accessed from the cafeteria and the perimeter office corridors. One of the exterior doors on the south wall of the cafeteria was replaced by glass windows.

The tower, technically a lenticular hyperboloid, is oriented along an east-west longitudinal axis and offset to the north in the plaza space. It is supported by steel columns held back 13' from the perimeter. Floor decks consist of cellular steel plates, with integral channels for electric conduit, overlaid with poured concrete. The non-load bearing skin of the curtain wall utilizes ¼" heat absorbing plate glass, tinted a blue-green, with interlocking aluminum alloy frames, thereby eliminating conventional mullions. Exterior grooved mullions applied at every third bay provide tracks to lower the window washing cab from the roof. Single-pane interior storm sash with UV film was added behind the glass in 1986. Spandrel sections are backed with an insulating layer of styrofoam and aluminum.

(8-86)

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The first floor of the tower at the plaza level serves as the main lobby. Recessed from the plane of the tower above, the lobby has full-height glass walls, except for two, three-bay exterior sections veneered with grey marble flanking the central glass doorway on the south side. The overhang, supported by splayed beams clad in stainless steel, has recessed lighting in the soffit. Access to the lobby is provided by two revolving doors on either side of a centered, double glass door on the north side. Interior walls are faced with book-matched, white travertine marble and the floor is covered with beige marble, laid in a four-foot grid. Supporting columns in the lobby are faced with stainless steel. The dropped ceiling, installed over the original plaster in the 1980s, contains individual recessed lights and track lighting. The floor plan, which has a visitors' reception area set off by a teak partition, has open seating and display areas at either end (Photograph #9). Twin elevator banks, also displaying white marble panels, provide access to the office floors above and the levels below grade (Photograph #10). Grey marble, similar to the exterior veneer panels, is utilized in this location on most of the upper floors. The interior of the elevator cabs is detailed in teak and brushed stainless. There also is an escalator in the west end to the grade level lounge on the floor below.

As designed, an open office plan (10,000 square feet of usable space on each floor) surrounded the mechanical cores, which are offset to the south (Exhibit F & G). On floors two through 11, the only dividers were glass partitions for executive offices along the perimeter near the elevators; the rest of the floor was left open. Over time, floors have been built out with temporary glass partitions for more individual office spaces; more permanent, fire-rated sheetrock partitions were installed on several floors in the 1980s. The original suspended ceiling system on all office floors contains fluorescent lighting strips, 54" on center, that run across the width of the building. Perimeter metal ducting is used for heating and air conditioning.

The upper two floors, which are reserved for company officials, are connected by a circular staircase in the east end (Photographs # 11, 12). Perimeter corridors encompass the mechanical room on the west end of the thirteenth floor, which has a boardroom with a domed plastered ceiling on the east end. On the twelfth floor the same pattern of fluorescent lighting found on the lower floors is utilized in the suspended ceiling of the office area and in the plastered ceiling of the chief executive officer's suite on the east end. The latter space consists of a corner office, conference room, and reception area with curved teak partitions, which are bordered by recessed lights. Built-in cabinets incorporate the building's ovoid plan, a motif repeated in the shelves of the free-standing entrance divider to the reception area.

**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)

**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**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**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.

**G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

URBAN PLANNING

**Period of Significance**

c. 1950 - 1964

**Significant Dates**

1963

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Max Abramovitz FAIA (1908-2004)

Name of repository: Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

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**Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, Hartford, Hartford County, CT**

**Section 8 Page 1**

**Statement of Significance**

The Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, a major architectural landmark in Hartford, is an exceptionally significant example of the Modernist style. Distinguished by its unique form and lenticular plan, the building was designed by Max Abramovitz, a recognized twentieth-century master (Criterion C). No other contemporary corporate structure in Connecticut approaches the significance and quality of this revolutionary design, a Modern interpretation of Miesian tradition that fully exploits the architectural potential of a pure geometric form enclosed in glass. From 1945 to 1976, he was a principal in Harrison & Abramovitz, one of the leading architectural firms in the United States, widely acclaimed for its central role in the planning and design of two of New York City's most important landmarks: United Nations Headquarters (1947-1953) and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (1955-1969). The Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, one of the most significant structures ever produced by this prestigious firm, generated unprecedented public interest. State and national newspapers reported on every step of the design and construction process, and in 1964, its first year of operation, 12,000 visitors toured the facility. Even though newer commercial buildings have been constructed nearby in the intervening 40 years, the Phoenix tower at One American Row remains the most significant addition to the Hartford skyline and the most memorable modern architectural landmark in the state, as distinctive a presence today as when it was completed in 1963 (Criteria Exception G).

While the Phoenix Insurance Company took great pride in the new headquarters, the building was much more than an enduring symbol of progressive corporate identity. Historically, the nominated property has achieved considerable significance for its pivotal role in the urban renewal movement that transformed so many American cities in the post World War II period (Criterion A). The corporate decision to remain in Hartford, the home of the company since 1851, assured the development of the entire complex known as Constitution Plaza, the first urban renewal project in the state. Often cited as a case study in urban planning literature today,<sup>1</sup> and one of the earliest renewal projects in the country, the project received a special award at the New England convention of the American Institute of Architects in 1965. Like so many of these pioneering efforts, this modern gateway to Hartford had direct links to an evolving superhighway system, echoing the *Ville Radieuse*, the futuristic plan Le Corbusier envisioned for Paris in the 1920s. Millions of Americans became familiar with a commercialized version of his "City of Tomorrow" at the General Motors "Futurama" exhibit at the New York World's Fair in 1939. The brave new world of superhighways and skyscrapers that company envisioned for the year 1960, foretold the ascendancy of the automobile culture in postwar America.

**Historical Background and Significance**

Urban renewal has a long history, extending back to the City Beautiful movement of the late nineteenth century. Largely inspired by the Worlds' Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1891-1893), and motivated by social reform, the movement modernized and transformed Connecticut's industrial cities. Scores of municipal and civic buildings were constructed and space was set aside for urban parks. Anticipating the movement by several decades, city beautification began in Hartford with the c. 1860 Bushnell Park, designed to clean up an industrial slum along the Park River. By the turn of the century, Frederick Law Olmsted's vision of a ring of parks around the city, encompassing 1300 acres, was completed by his sons, Charles and Frederick, Jr. The commercial building boom that followed the Civil War produced goods and services for rapidly expanding urban populations. Major retailers in Hartford built grand new department stores downtown in the early 1900s to serve city residents, which also attracted shoppers from surrounding towns. Hartford insurance companies

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent is Alexander Garvin, *The American City: What Works, What Doesn't*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), pp. 159-161. See also Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001), pp. 464-465.

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**Section 8 Page 2**

and banks vied with each other to produce the most imposing building; when the Travelers Tower was completed in 1919, it was the tallest skyscraper between New York and Boston. Monumental new municipal buildings lined downtown streets and the construction of Bushnell Memorial Hall in 1929 completed the transformation of the heart of the city. Meanwhile, Hartford's population had doubled; largely fueled by foreign immigration, it reached a near record high of 164,000. Although residential construction tried to keep pace, the "City Beautiful" image was tarnished by overcrowded inner-city neighborhoods with deteriorated buildings.

City fathers became actively concerned about the issues of urban blight in Hartford in the early years of the Great Depression. A city-sponsored, in-depth survey of Hartford's deteriorating neighborhoods in 1934 recommended applying for federal funds from the Housing Administration of the Public Works Administration (PWA), a New Deal program created in 1933. Slum clearance and housing development projects funded by the PWA proved popular, especially in the Midwest. While Hartford did not participate in this program, it received funding from other federal agencies in this period. For example, dikes were erected along the river after the record flood of 1936, the last of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) depression-era projects in the city, which was followed by the construction of the first riverfront parkway, the Whitehead Highway, the forerunner of Interstate 91. Plans to extend this highway north of State Street were underway in 1940, but construction was halted until after the war.<sup>2</sup>

After World War II, the full power and resources of the federal government were brought to bear on the complex postwar problems confronting city planners. For Hartford, the key economic issues were deteriorating neighborhoods, where the cost of municipal services exceeded tax revenues, and the loss of jobs and population to the countervailing forces of suburbanization.<sup>3</sup> The federal prescription for these universal urban problems was redevelopment. In the belief that declining cities could be revitalized by replacing obsolete building stock, in 1949 Congress passed Title I of the U.S. Housing Act, which reimbursed cities for two thirds of the cost of redevelopment (subsequently amended by Congress to include commercial and cultural programs with a demonstrated public benefit). While the successes and failures of Title I are being still debated, with few notable exceptions, such as Pittsburgh and Baltimore, urban renewal largely failed to produce more livable cities or reverse suburban market and population trends. Some projects never got beyond the demolition stage, creating urban wastelands. Nevertheless, over the next quarter century, Title I generated 2532 projects in 1000 cities, federally subsidized at a cost of nearly \$13 billion.

City planners, real estate analysts, chambers of commerce, and politicians had high hopes for the social and economic potential of urban renewal in Connecticut, an initial optimism often reflected in national journals. For example, Constitution Plaza was hailed in the *Architectural Record* as "Insuring the Growth of Hartford."<sup>4</sup> Articles in the *National Real Estate Investor* in the early 1960s reported that Constitution Plaza "has proven to be the spark which ignited a revitalized faith in the Connecticut Capitol City," and was attracting visitors from all over the country. In addition, this trade paper credited urban renewal with having an economic ripple effect in Hartford on the downtown hotel, retail, and commercial residential markets.

That these programs proved to be politically popular in Connecticut was demonstrated in New Haven, where Richard C. Lee was elected mayor in 1953 on an urban renewal platform. The second city in the state to participate in the Title I

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<sup>2</sup> Hartford insurance companies called upon Robert Moses, the famed New York City planner, to advise on highway development in 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Federal decadal censuses show Hartford's population still growing after World War II, reaching an all time high of 177,397 by 1950. In the ensuing decade, however, in-migration was exceeded by out-migration, with more than 95,000 people leaving the city. Many moved to nearby suburban towns that make up the Greater Hartford Metropolitan Region, where the population nearly doubled.

<sup>4</sup> *Architectural Record* 135 (March 1964), pp. 178-187.

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**Section 8 Page 3**

program, New Haven eventually received more federal subsidies than any other city in the country.<sup>5</sup> Although new schools and housing projects were also constructed there, at the heart of the New Haven renewal plan was the Church Street Redevelopment, which was designed to make downtown New Haven a shopping destination. A large section of the business district right next to the New Haven Green was cleared to make way for a modern shopping mall, which was completed in 1964. Despite the construction of a parking garage and a connector to the interstate highway system, the mall failed to attract suburban shoppers. By the 1980s, the new retail facilities were abandoned or demolished.

**Urban Renewal in Hartford**

The Hartford Redevelopment Agency was established in 1950; federal advance planning funds were secured in 1952 for the complex that came to be called "Constitution Plaza." The area targeted for renewal occupied several blocks near the river along Front and Market streets. Identified as a high priority for slum clearance back in 1934, development there required the relocation of approximately 500 people and over 100 small businesses. The renewal area included the block that was the eventual site for the Phoenix Life Insurance Company. Then mostly occupied by large tobacco company warehouses and sorting sheds, this block also contained 25 stores, shops, and restaurants along Front (now Columbus Boulevard) and State streets.

As was the case in many cities, redevelopment in Hartford turned out to be a lengthy process. Public opposition to demolition of this ethnic neighborhood, predominately Italian-American since the turn of the century, and legal challenges to the city's right to take property by eminent domain for commercial resale held up the project for two more years. Four more years were consumed with acquisition of the land, selection of a developer, and the passage of a \$800,000 bond issue--the city's one-third share of the total projected cost. Although demolition finally got underway in 1958, by then, no major tenants were willing to commit to the project and the designated developer, G. H. McGraw Company, could not obtain construction financing. Commercial and industrial firms were following their employees to the suburbs. In fact, the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company, as the company was then known, had already purchased a suburban site on Asylum Avenue in West Hartford. Connecticut General Insurance (now CIGNA) had left the city (for a new suburban headquarters in Bloomfield) as did the largest local broadcasting company, WTIC, and other businesses, such as the Fuller Brush Company, had followed suit, which resulted in a combined loss of more than 5000 jobs.

The turning point in the development of Constitution Plaza came in January 1960, when Phoenix Mutual announced it would relocate within the City of Hartford. Although often attributed to the lobbying of the Hartford Chamber of Commerce and other city boosters, in reality, this commitment was made only after company officials seriously studied the pros and cons of relocation. In 1958, a report prepared for the company by a Los Angeles architectural and engineering firm compared the locational and financial advantages of the suburban and downtown sites.<sup>6</sup> An employee profile, based on responses to a detailed questionnaire, revealed that most of the workforce wanted to remain in Hartford. Despite the much higher projected cost of participating in the redevelopment project,<sup>7</sup> employee preference for a downtown location as well as the company's deep roots in Hartford clearly were decisive factors. By 1960 the company had selected the renowned architectural firm of Harrison and Abramovitz, then one of the top two architectural firms in the country,<sup>8</sup> and purchased this 3.6-acre site from the Hartford Redevelopment Agency. The two largest banks then in Connecticut, Hartford National and Connecticut Bank and Trust, soon came on board as principal tenants across the street,

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Garvin, *The American City*, p.160.

<sup>6</sup> Welton Becket and Associates, "Phoenix Mutual Study: An Economic and Financial Comparison of Two Home Office Locations" (Los Angeles, 1958).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>8</sup> The only other comparable firm in the country at the time was Skidmore, Owens, & Merrill (SOM), also based in New York City.



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**Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, Hartford, Hartford County, CT**

**Section 8 Page 4**

and WTIC agreed to build a new broadcasting station there. Encouraged by these commitments, Travelers Insurance created Constitution Plaza, Inc. to finance, construct, and operate the rest of the 12-acre complex to the north of One American Row.

One of the pioneers in the self-proclaimed “Insurance Capitol of the World,” the Phoenix Company had been doing business in Hartford since 1851. It had carved out a unique niche in the nascent life insurance business with the founding of the American Temperance Life Insurance Company, which issued policies only to those who pledged to abstain from alcohol.<sup>9</sup> Although there were other older established firms in the fire and marine insurance business in the city, such as Aetna or The Hartford, at this time very few companies in the United States sold life insurance. Renamed Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance in 1861, the company moved in 1897 to a new six-story building at 49 Pearl Street, right across the street from their earlier rented offices, which was designed by J.Cleveland Cady (1837-1919). By the early twentieth century, Phoenix Mutual was a national company. One of the first insurance companies to advertise in magazines with a national circulation, it also hired a New York advertising firm, another first for the industry. Among the other innovations that this progressive company instituted were professional training for agents and direct mail advertising. Business doubled between 1910 and 1920 and a new office building was erected at 79 Elm Street, a Renaissance Revival palazzo that faced Bushnell Park. Surviving the Great Depression, a period when many in the industry went under, and the turmoil of World War II, when many employees were in the service, the company emerged in 1948 with one billion dollars of life insurance in force. Having branched out into financial services and retirement planning for policy holders in the postwar period, Phoenix Mutual once again needed to expand its facilities.<sup>10</sup>

Benjamin J. Holland, former general counsel who became president of the company in 1948, was the driving force behind the relocation of corporate headquarters to One American Row. As Chairman of the Board in 1961, he headed the building committee and took a proactive role in overseeing the whole process—from his unveiling of the architectural model to his surprised board to the completion of the building. Construction progress was tracked by area newspapers and the *New York Times*, starting in February of 1961.<sup>11</sup> The following month, *Progressive Architecture* was the first architectural journal to report on the design.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps only Holland realized how such a dramatic building would change the image of the company, but his board soon came to terms with this unconventional structure, won over by the chairman’s enthusiasm. Employees were equally surprised and enthusiastic, responding with a standing ovation when a view of the architect’s model was projected on the screen at the official presentation in Hartford’s Statler Hotel ballroom on February 21, 1961 (Exhibit H).<sup>13</sup> Ed Richardson, one of the company managers, spoke for the crowd that day, “We could not believe that Phoenix would do anything like the boat building...still the most impressive building in Hartford.”<sup>14</sup> After the groundbreaking ceremony in July 1961, an editorial in the *Hartford Courant* lauded the striking oval tower as an architectural monument to the rebirth of the historic heart of the city.

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<sup>9</sup> Although on moral grounds, the seven founders were genuine temperance advocates, they also recognized that abstainers were better actuarial bets. They also included slavery abolitionists; the most notable was Francis Gillette, the father of William Gillette, the actor. There were other coverage restrictions. Policy holders needed company permission to travel to dangerous places (California, Oregon, and the Deep South during the summer months), or to engage in dangerous occupations (service in the military, gunpowder manufacture, or as firemen).

<sup>10</sup> The later history of the firm included the formation of Phoenix Home Life Insurance Company in 1992 through a merger with Home Life Insurance Company of New York. At the time, Phoenix was the larger of the two companies, with \$ 6.4 billion in assets, \$76 billion in policies in force, and 2500 employees. Other events included the acquisition of Confederated Life Insurance of Canada and other firms and the world-wide expansion of the wealth management divisions.

<sup>11</sup> “Insurance Building Slated for Hartford,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1961. See also “Phoenix to Grace Skyline with Sleek, New Plaza Home,” *Hartford Courant*, February 3, 1961.

<sup>12</sup> “Ellipse for Hartford: Building a Major Part of ‘Constitution Plaza,’” *Progressive Architecture* 42 (March 1961), p. 59.

<sup>13</sup> A black and white photograph of the same image had already been published. See “Elliptical Building to House Offices,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1961.

<sup>14</sup> Marian Calabro, *A Wealth of History: 150 Years with Phoenix* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc, 2001), p.61.

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A fast track project from the start, the initial building permits only covered the footings. A team of associates at Harrison and Abramovitz (17 at one point) was kept busy producing construction and detail drawings for the rest of the building in the coming months. Correspondence between Holland and Abramovitz and John O'Brien, the firm's coordinating architect for the project, shows that Holland kept a close eye on the process and often called for revisions to the detailing of the lobby and executive floors.<sup>15</sup> He also chaired numerous meetings to discuss the mutual concerns, such as landscaping, or the location of the pedestrian bridge over State Street, with the developers and architects of Constitution Plaza<sup>16</sup> and the owners of the neighboring Hartford Steam Boiler Company. Minutes of the meetings were sent to Abramovitz, who often flew to Hartford to meet with Holland to resolve issues, or company representatives came to his office in New York.<sup>17</sup>

Construction proceeded rapidly with the steel framework topped out in June 1962 and in May 1963, the *New York Times* reported that the glass façade was in place.<sup>18</sup> Although the formal dedication, scheduled for November 24, 1963, was cancelled due to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; the brief ceremony held in December was duly noted in the press, with a full-page, boldface headline in the *New York Times* announcing, "Hartford Launches a Tall, Glass Ship-Shaped Building."<sup>19</sup> At this event, a floral anchor was lowered by crane from the top floor into the reflecting pool of the plaza courtyard, a symbolic mooring of the building that underscored the permanence of the company's recommitment to Hartford.<sup>20</sup>

### **Architectural Background and Significance**

American architecture was in a state of flux by the late 1950s. The dominance of the European Modernism of the Bauhaus introduced in this country in the 1930s by Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), was on the wane. While not wholly discarding the principles of the International style, as it had come to be known, a new generation of architects experimented with new styles and forms. Although the limited urban language of the ubiquitous glass box persisted in the hands of less able practitioners, these apostates challenged their contemporaries and elders alike to rethink their architectural philosophy. New buildings designed in this period ranged from the new geometries of architects like Max Abramovitz to the more conservative New Formalism, a style in which façade screening was a dominant feature. The new Brutalism, exemplified in Connecticut by Paul Rudolph's 1962 Art and Architecture Building at Yale University, deconstructed conventional rectilinear form in radical ways, often at the expense of function. Even Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret; 1887-1966), an early proponent of the modern glass skyscraper, had turned to this anti-rationalist style by the late 1940s. Neo-Expressionists, most notably Eero Saarinen (1910-1961) dealt in pure organic and geometric concrete forms, creating fluid sculptures, as he did for the David W. Ingalls Hockey Rink (also on the Yale campus), which was completed in 1958.

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<sup>15</sup> Harrison and Abramovitz File and Construction Drawings, Phoenix Life Insurance Company Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. In one remarkable letter, which also illustrates the company's respect for their employees, Holland passed along sketches drawn by the executive secretaries for the design of their desks and the layout of their work stations.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Dubois, supervising architect, Ely J. Kahn (Kahn & Jacobs), Curtis & Davis, Edmund Janas, and Hideo Sasaki (Sasaki, Walter Associates; landscape designers).

<sup>17</sup> Max Abramovitz Architectural Records and Papers Collection, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, NY, Series I, Personal Papers, Box 3. References to the Phoenix building begin on February 1, 1962 and continue to November 27, 1964. The appointment books for 1961 are missing.

<sup>18</sup> "Elliptical Tower on Hartford Skyline," *New York Times*, May 5, 1963.

<sup>19</sup> Photographs of the tower and the interior layout accompanied the article, "Two-Sided Tower Offers Wide View," which fully described the building. *New York Times*, December 15, 1963.

<sup>20</sup> "Ahoy Hartford: All's Ship Shape as Phoenix Mutual Anchors to Future at New Building," *Hartford Courant*, December 3, 1963.

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**The Architect and his Career**

Max Abramovitz was born in Chicago in 1908, the son of Jewish immigrants from Bessarabia, a town in the Russian Pale near the Romanian border.<sup>21</sup> After graduating from Crane Technical High School in Chicago, where he received a basic grounding in the building sciences, Abramovitz received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a Master of Science from Columbia University in 1931. Awarded a postgraduate fellowship by Columbia, he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1932-1934). From 1939 to 1942 he was associate professor of architectural design on a part time basis at the School of Fine Arts at Yale University. As a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S Army Corps of Engineers during World War II, he designed and installed airfields in China for General Chennault's "Flying Tigers," for which he received the Legion of Merit. He was recalled to duty in the Korean War as special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

Abramovitz began his professional career in 1935 with the firm of (Walter K.) Harrison and (Andre) Fouilhoux. As an associate, he assisted in the design of several of the last skyscrapers for Rockefeller Center in New York City (1929-1940). Although Harrison's first partnership with Harvey W. Corbett and William H. MacMurray was only one several architectural firms collectively involved in this pioneering masterpiece in multi-block urban planning, Rockefeller Center established Harrison's reputation as an urban planner and was the start of his lifelong association as chief architect for the Rockefeller family. Abramovitz also was a major contributor to the firm's design of the Tylon and Perisphere, the symbols of the New York World's Fair of 1939, and the first plan for Battery Park City. In 1941 he became a full partner in the firm, which, after the death of Fouilhoux in 1945, became Harrison & Abramovitz. When Harrison withdrew from the firm in 1976, Abramovitz selected Michael M. Harris and James Kingsland, senior associates, as his partners, and headed the successor firm, Abramovitz, Kingsland & Schiff, until his retirement in the late 1980s.

Abramovitz designed a wide range of buildings for government agencies, and educational and religious institutions, as well as offices, laboratories, and factories for major corporations.<sup>22</sup> Not wedded to a single stylistic expression, he was equally adept in many styles and his buildings often employed creative use of advances in building technology. Major government projects include the Central Intelligence Agency Building, Langley, Virginia (1961); and the U.S. Submarine and Air Base, Panama Canal Zone (1942). When Walter Harrison was appointed chief planner for the United Nations headquarters, as his deputy, Abramovitz was the project architect who coordinated the efforts of an international design team, which included Le Corbusier.<sup>23</sup> He also supervised preparation of construction documents and designed the two glass apartment towers there that provide an effective counterbalance to the sweep and mass of the Assembly Hall and Secretariat. For Lincoln Center, a collaborative effort with leading American architects of the period, Abramovitz' Philharmonic Hall in the New Formalist manner was the first building to be completed. Utilizing glass curtain walls partially hidden behind a classical arcade, it was echoed by Walter Harrison's design for the 1966 Metropolitan Opera House, and together the partners designed the classically inspired plaza. A noted university planner and architect,

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<sup>21</sup> They had first emigrated to Turkey to participate in a land development program sponsored by Baron Maurice de Hirsch (mistakenly identified by Abramovitz as one of the Rothschilds), the famous German-Jewish philanthropist who devoted his life to the support of his people, especially those driven out of the Pale by the pogroms of the 1890s. In the United States, the de Hirsch foundation, established to resettle Jewish immigrant families on farms, became the Jewish Agricultural Aid Society (JAAS) by 1900. The Abramovitz family may have received one of the JAAS mortgages. The father, a farmer in the old country, bought a farm in Michigan when Max was about 4 years old, and the family stayed there until about 1915, when they returned to Chicago. "Oral History Interview with Max Abramovitz," *Oral History Project* (Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc., 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Based on an agreement when Abramovitz first became a partner in Harrison and Abramovitz, all building documents generated during the partnership carried just the name of the firm, a policy that has led to some confusion about attribution. Building attributions here are taken from the separate lists compiled for Abramovitz and his partner in the appendix of Victoria Newhouse, *Wallace K. Harrison, Architect* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989). These lists were compiled by Newhouse in consultation with both architects, shortly before Harrison's death in 1981.

<sup>23</sup> While it is generally recognized today that Le Corbusier was essentially responsible for the original concept, he did not participate in the development of the design. It was left to Harrison and Abramovitz to translate his clay model into reality.

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Abramovitz designed 16 major buildings and the master plan for Brandeis University,<sup>24</sup> and a dozen more buildings at other institutions, such as New York University and Radcliffe College, as well as performing and fine arts centers at the universities of Iowa and Illinois. Religious commissions included three university chapels at Brandeis and the Neo-Expressionist Beth Zion Temple in Buffalo, in which the sanctuary is enfolded by slanted, undulating concrete walls.

An active member of Civil Engineering Society of America (CESA), Abramovitz often lectured on the need for modern architects to understand building science as well as design. Recognizing that technology was not keeping pace with architectural expression, he often called upon industry to expand research and development programs, especially in curtain wall construction techniques.<sup>25</sup> He was among the first architects to utilize computer technology as an aid to developing a building program. For the Westinghouse headquarters (1968) in Pittsburgh, computers were used to generate data to design water-cooled lighting systems as heat exchangers for the entire building. United States Steel (1967), also in Pittsburgh, a triangular building supported by an exposed exoskeleton of water-cooled structural steel, was considered a breakthrough in engineering for fire safety.<sup>26</sup> Another first was his design for the Assembly Hall for his alma mater, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which was completed in 1963. Then one of the world's largest edge-supported domes, with a seating capacity of 16,000, it had a 400-foot span and featured splayed walls of reinforced concrete. The campus also includes another Abramovitz design, the 1969 Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, a seven-acre complex with four theaters and an outdoor amphitheater.

Abramovitz became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1952. Awarded the Gold Medal from the National Academy of Design in 1975, he was honored in 1987 with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York Society of Architects. Among his many other awards and honorary degrees was a doctorate from Columbia University. His alma mater also honored him with President's Award for his major contributions to the campus, the East Law School (1962), Amsterdam Plaza (1964), and the School of International Affairs (1970). Max Abramovitz died on September 12, 2004 at age 96, just two days before the first major retrospective of his work opened at Columbia's Miriam and Eli D. Wallach Gallery.<sup>27</sup>

**The Phoenix Commission**

Responding to the client's desire for a "daring" structure, Abramovitz produced a radical design--one that reflected the company's progressive management style. With its unique two-sided, lenticular form, believed to be the first of its kind in the world,<sup>28</sup> the Phoenix Life Insurance Company was immediately known as "The Boat Building." Conceptually this analogy is made explicit by a two-ended form that appears to float above its moorings, and the water lapping at its eastern prow. More subtle was the historical resonance of the building's orientation on an east-west axis, for the tower points both to Hartford's early beginnings as a colonial riverport and its later development as a center of commerce. Only one publication took exception to the nautical analogy; an international journal likened the building to an aerofoil. Noting that feeling of lightness conveyed by the treatment of the exterior as a glass skin rather than a true curtain wall, it concluded

<sup>24</sup> The Abramovitz campus plan did not rely on an earlier preliminary plan designed by Eero Saarinen.

<sup>25</sup> "Tomorrow's curtain wall," a speech before the Building Research Institute conference. Max Abramovitz, Avery Library Archives, Series II Professional Papers, Box 6, Folder 24. This was just one of his many speeches and essays on building science and the purpose of architecture.

<sup>26</sup> *Architecture & Engineering News* 10 (September 1968), pp. 76, 77.

<sup>27</sup> "Max Abramovitz, 96, Dies; Architect of Avery Fisher Hall," *New York Times*, September 15, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> The only known precedent, Gio Ponti's 1960 Pirelli Tower in Milan, does not have the smooth curves of a true lenticular form. There the convex walls of reinforced concrete are beveled into a lozenge shape. In the Diversified Services Building in Minneapolis, a similar and much later example of a beveled form in glass by Johnson/Burgee, which was completed in 1973, the two ends are serrated to provide additional corner offices.

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that the natural medium for the building was the sky.<sup>29</sup> This impression is enhanced as the convex surfaces act like wide-angle lenses, reflecting back a panorama of ever changing atmospheric effects as well as faceted images of nearby buildings.

While older nearby historic buildings form a backdrop and the surrounding chorus of commercial architecture establishes the modern urban context, none has the star quality of the Phoenix building. Indeed, as the Hartford Architecture Conservancy observed, unlike the “unimaginative glass and steel boxes” that proliferated in the 1960s, [when curtain wall] technology is used to create a new form such as the Phoenix Building, the effect is breathtaking.”<sup>30</sup> Taking note of its distinctive presence in his discussion of Constitution Plaza, architectural historian Leland Roth wrote, “The most striking was the green glass, almond-shaped Phoenix Life Insurance Building... notable as one of the very first shaped office buildings.”<sup>31</sup>

Although historically and physically connected to the rest of Constitution Plaza, conceptually the designs are quite different. North of State Street, rectangular curtain wall and concrete buildings turn their back on the city. Facing inward towards a multilevel plaza, designed to be flanked by retail stores, the composition suggests an *agora* or marketplace. An entirely different classical theme and philosophy informed the architect’s design for the Phoenix plaza (Exhibit I). The isolated vertical slab on a horizontal plinth, a composition that reflected Abramovitz’ Beaux Arts training, was, of course, classically inspired by the temples of ancient Greece. In this modern commercial urban setting, however, the plaza provides a transition zone between the city and the essentially private corporate sphere of the tower. At the heart of this composition is a sunken courtyard, “a quiet retreat from the noise, confusion, and austerity of the downtown street.”<sup>32</sup> In full view from the surrounding promenades, it was only accessible to employees. Designed to create an intimate suburban setting within an urban context, this feature and the democratic open office plan of the building itself (discussed below) embodied the humanistic principles that were central to his philosophy—that cities could and should be ideal environments for residents and workers alike. Also, believing as he did that modern architecture was an appropriate setting for works of art, Abramovitz added a dramatic sculpture as the focal point of the courtyard.

Abramovitz had first used the raised plaza to good effect in his 1959 Loeb Student Center for New York University,<sup>33</sup> and often returned to this composition in his later commissions for office towers. In the design of the Phoenix building, however, classical symmetry is subtly altered by the offset of the major axis of the tower to the north, thus creating a broader sweep on the south side of the plaza. From this perspective, the full scope of the tower can be observed, reinforcing the more human scale of this relatively modest skyscraper.<sup>34</sup> The east-west alignment of the tower, irrespective of its metaphoric linkage to history, also provides a nicely scaled anchoring terminus for Constitution Plaza as a whole. And, as architect and planner Patrick Pinnell has observed, “Turning the long axis perpendicular to Interstate 91... presents the more dramatic profile to the largest audience... and more clearly separates it from the older towers rising behind it.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> United States: ellipse helps democracy, *Interbuild/Arena*, October 1967, pp 31-32.

<sup>30</sup> *Hartford Architecture Volume One: Downtown*, Hartford Architecture Conservancy Survey, p.89.

<sup>31</sup> Roth, *American Architecture*, pp. 465.

<sup>32</sup> “Union Bank Square, Los Angeles” in *Process: Architecture 90* (August 1990, pp. 76-79.

<sup>33</sup> Sometimes referred to as the “downtown cousin” of Gordon Bunshaft’s Lever House, the International style icon, this building was demolished to make way for a new structure by SOM, much to the dismay of architectural critics and preservationists.

<sup>34</sup> At the architect’s insistence, a thirteenth floor was added to the tower to maintain the correct proportion between the height of the building and the dimensions of the plaza.

<sup>35</sup> Personal communication, March 18, 2004.

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Indeed, like many iconic office towers of the Modern period, the Phoenix headquarters was designed to attract the eye of the passing highway motorist. As a memorable landmark image for the company and the City of Hartford, it establishes a sense of place like no other building on this urban skyline. For many who travel the interstate highways, it is the major architectural landmark in the state. Paul Goldberger, architecture critic for the *New Yorker*, is among the countless numbers who “have fond memories as kid...driving [up from New York] and looking out for the Phoenix Mutual tower, the boat-shaped icon that was just about the only interesting thing between New Haven and Boston.”<sup>36</sup> Unlike many of the corporate skyscrapers of the Post Modern period, however, its sleek form, color, and fine detailing also stand up to more immediate perspectives--drawing the appreciative eye of pedestrians on the streets below and strollers and joggers who now use the Phoenix plaza every day.

The Phoenix commission was not only an opportunity to create a radically different building, but one that was cost effective. Utilizing a lenticular open plan said to produce the same amount of usable floor space as a conventional rectangular building, but at two-thirds the cost, according to Robert A. M. Stern, “this radical conception grows out of a rational evaluation of the way the hierarchies of office life [at Phoenix] are organized.”<sup>37</sup> The plan also was considerably more democratic in the allotment of space than the usual loft office buildings of the period. Corner offices, the traditional executive perquisite, were virtually eliminated and clerical staff enjoyed the same extensive vistas of the city and the river valley as management. No detail was overlooked as the architect selected and provided everything from file cabinets and office equipment to furnishings and apparently decreed their placement in the building. Even today the cafeteria still displays the same diagonal arrangement of the same selected tables and chairs (Exhibit J), and original upholstered chairs and sofas can be found in the lounges and the lobby.

The Phoenix headquarters was just one of the architect’s 30 commissions for office buildings and corporate headquarters in the United States and France between 1949 and 1971. Many incorporated new advances in construction technology, making Abramovitz one of the few architects recognized and honored by both engineering and architectural societies. For instance, his Phoenix design received an award from the American Institute of Steel Construction in 1965. Awards were based on “outstanding examples of aesthetic leadership that utilized the full potential of structural steel.”<sup>38</sup> Jurors, who well understood the complexities of designing and detailing a two-sided steel and glass structure, were equally impressed by the beauty of its pristine sculptural form, enhanced by the play of light over the curved surfaces.

The Phoenix Building has been featured in several architectural exhibitions. The first, an exhibit of his work in 1968, was held at the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. There for the first time Abramovitz was publicly identified as the architect of the Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building and the ten other buildings in the exhibit all formerly attributed to the firm.<sup>39</sup> The Phoenix design was also included in “New Architecture in New England,” an exhibition held at the de Cordova Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts, in 1974. Among the other master architects honored there for work in Connecticut were Kevin Roche, I.M. Pei, and Gordon Bunshaft, the latter for his Beinecke Library at Yale University. Appropriately enough, the Phoenix has also been selected for inclusion in a symposium and exhibition, “Preservation of Modern Buildings,” to be held at the Art and Architecture School at Columbia University in the fall of 2004.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Goldberger, “Keep It Real, Hartford,” a speech to the Connecticut Humanities Council, excerpted in the *Hartford Courant*, April 18, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> “Constitution Plaza after One Year,” *Progressive Architecture* 46 (December 1965), p. 169.

<sup>38</sup> “Beauty in Steel Buildings: Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Building,” *Architectural Awards of Excellence, American Institute of Steel Construction*, 1965, p.18.

<sup>39</sup> See footnote 25. Among the other designs Abramovitz selected for the exhibit were campus buildings at Brandeis, Columbia, Radcliffe, and the University of Illinois. The only other commercial buildings in the exhibition were the Equitable Life Insurance Society Building in Pittsburgh (1960), and Wachovia National Bank in Charlotte, North Carolina (1958).

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**Conclusion**

A versatile and prolific modern master, throughout his architectural career Max Abramovitz was “engaged in some of the most dramatic and unordinary work of our time—the creation of those large, costly and occasionally beautiful structures that make up the city scene.”<sup>40</sup> As he so ably demonstrated in the Phoenix Insurance Company Building, while not wholly abandoning the doctrinaire assumptions of the Miesian tradition, Abramovitz was one the first architects to fully explore the architectural and engineering potential of shaped volumes.<sup>41</sup> In the counter cyclical nature of twentieth-century architecture, his distinctive contributions to the Modern architectural esthetic, which did so much to establish his firm’s reputation as a leader in contemporary design, were often eclipsed by the ascendant Post Modernists, who came to dominate the field. As a consequence, some of Abramovitz’ projects like the Phoenix Building rarely received the sustained critical attention they deserved. It has taken nearly a half century to put his body of work in perspective and fully understand his approach to design—a constant striving for the pure fusion of form and technology that succeeded so well in the Phoenix commission. It is only fitting that Thomas Fisher, Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Minnesota and former editor of *Progressive Architecture*, the first journal to report on the design, ranks the Phoenix headquarters today as the most important building ever produced by the firm of Harrison & Abramovitz.<sup>42</sup>

His architectural colleagues here in Connecticut agree. On behalf of the Historic Resources Committee of Connecticut AIA, chairman Roy F. Gilley III summarized the architectural significance of the building as it stands today:

The Phoenix is a distinctive and mature design of Modernist architecture.... still the gateway landmark, whether one travels on Interstate 84, Interstate 91, or enters the city over Founders Bridge and up State Street to the city’s center. A relatively small high-rise of only 14 stories, the building has a presence impossible to ignore. Its location anchoring the south end of Constitution Plaza, its sophisticated and technically successful design, and its color, all make it a landmark in the city. The other curtain wall buildings built [here] in the same period by major architectural firms [all have] rectangular footprints and could have been built anywhere in the country. The Phoenix uses similar curtain wall construction but here Max Abramovitz has molded the building into an identity, has carefully created a mass that “speaks” to Hartford’s past and future. Throughout the building, attention to detail, organization of internal functions, [and] relationship to site....are melded into a modernistic masterpiece.

While the design pendulum has recently swung away from the modern movement and preservationists decry the failures of the urban renewal movement, here is a building that everyone agrees is an architectural gem that is also a design landmark in Hartford, a wonderful gift to the city from an extremely talented and thoughtful architect....great architecture metaphorically leading Hartford into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> “Concern for Detail: Max Abramovitz,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1962.

<sup>41</sup> Roth, *American Architecture*, pp. 465.

<sup>42</sup> Personal communication, March 11, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Roy F. Gilley III to J. Paul Loether, Deputy SHPO (Connecticut), March 17, 2004.

**Phoenix Life Insurance Company**

**Hartford, CT**

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

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**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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Max Abramovitz Architectural Records and Papers Collection. Drawings and Archives Collection, Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

Phoenix Archives. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut. Harrison and Abramovitz File. Also includes Construction Drawings, Building Files, and Photograph Collection.

State Archives, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Hartford, 1922, 1948-1950 (microfilm); Hartford Report File, Box 54, Records Group 32, Records of the Emergency Relief Commission, 1933-1937.

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The boundaries of the nominated property are shown on the attached site plan (Exhibit A-1) drawn to scale from the City of Hartford Tax Assessor's Maps and described in the Hartford Land Records in 1061: 411, 495 and 1088: 527.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundaries encompass the entire site purchased and developed by the Phoenix Life Insurance Company as depicted and described above.

Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building

Name of Property

Hartford, CT

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3.6

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 18 693110 4626650 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By:**

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC date 3/15/04

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Phoenix Life Insurance Company Building, Hartford, Hartford County, CT

Section: Photo/Exhibits Page 1

**List of Photographs:**

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates. LLC

Dates: January - March 2004

Negatives: On file with the State Historic Preservation Office

1. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View from Statehouse Square, camera facing E
2. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View from Bridge to Constitution Plaza, camera facing S
3. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View from Phoenix Gateway (Travelers Tower on L), camera facing SW
4. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View from Bridge to Travelers Plaza, camera facing N
5. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View from State Street, camera facing SW
6. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Courtyard, camera facing S
7. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Tower (east end) with Courtyard, camera facing SE
8. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, View of Plaza from Offices (east side), camera facing SW
9. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Elevator Banks in Main Lobby, camera facing SW
10. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Main Lobby (west end), camera facing SW
11. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, Office Suite, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, camera facing N
12. Phoenix Life Insurance Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor (south side), camera facing SE

**List of Exhibits:**

- A. Site Plan: Phoenix Life Insurance Company, 2004
- B. Site Plan: Constitution Plaza, 1961
- C. View of Steel Frame, 1962
- D. Aerial View of Construction Site, 1962
- E. View of Courtyard under Construction, 1963
- F. Layout Typical Office Floor (rendering), 1963
- G. View of Typical Office Floor (east end), 1963
- H. View of Architectural Model, 1961
- I. Architectural Rendering of Site Plan, 1961
- J. View of Cafeteria, 1963



CONSTITUTION PLAZA

STATE STREET

Phoenix Gateway

COLUMBUS BOULEVARD

GROVE STREET

To Travelers Plaza

One American Row

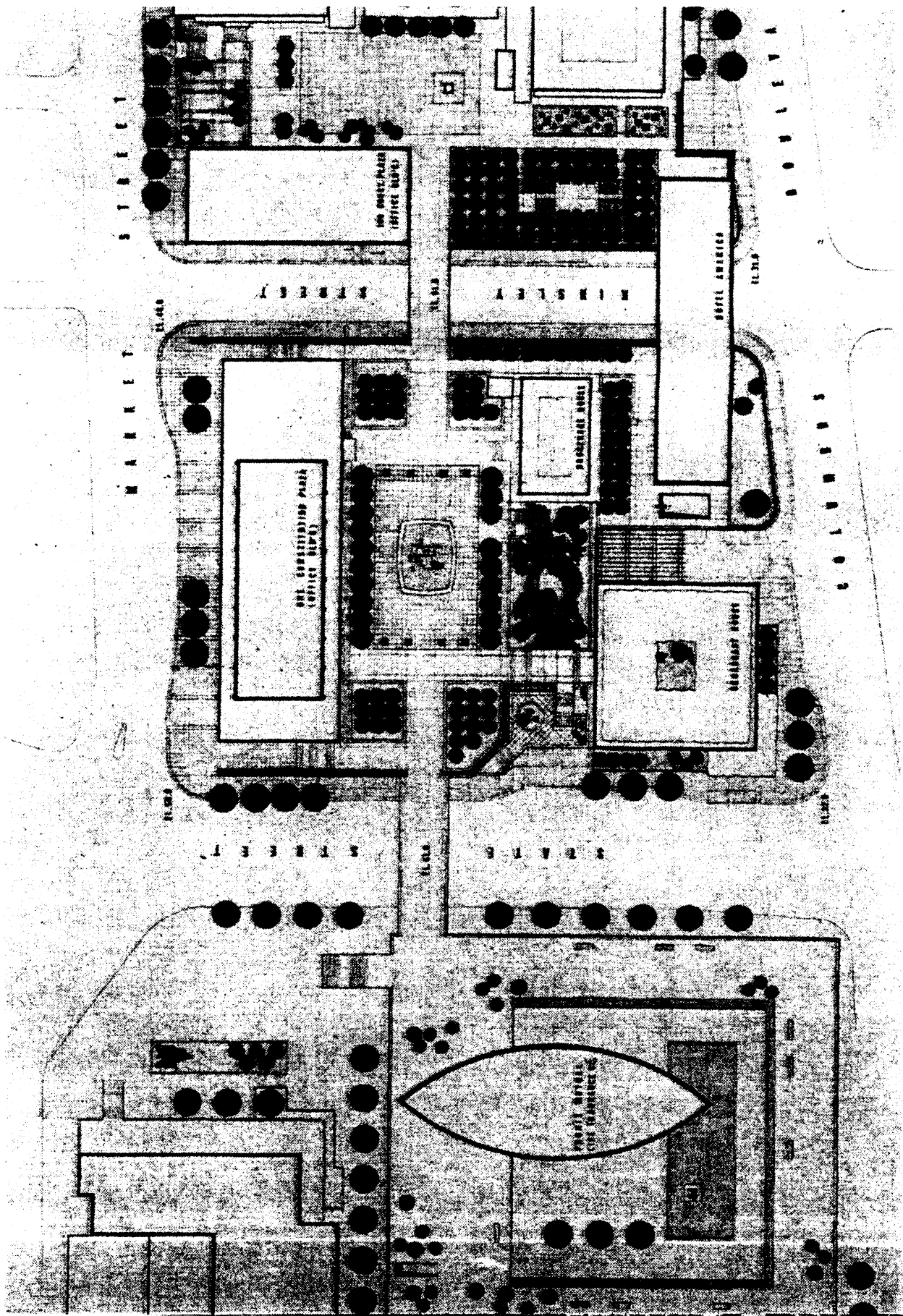
PROSPECT STREET

PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT A: SITE PLAN: PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY 2004

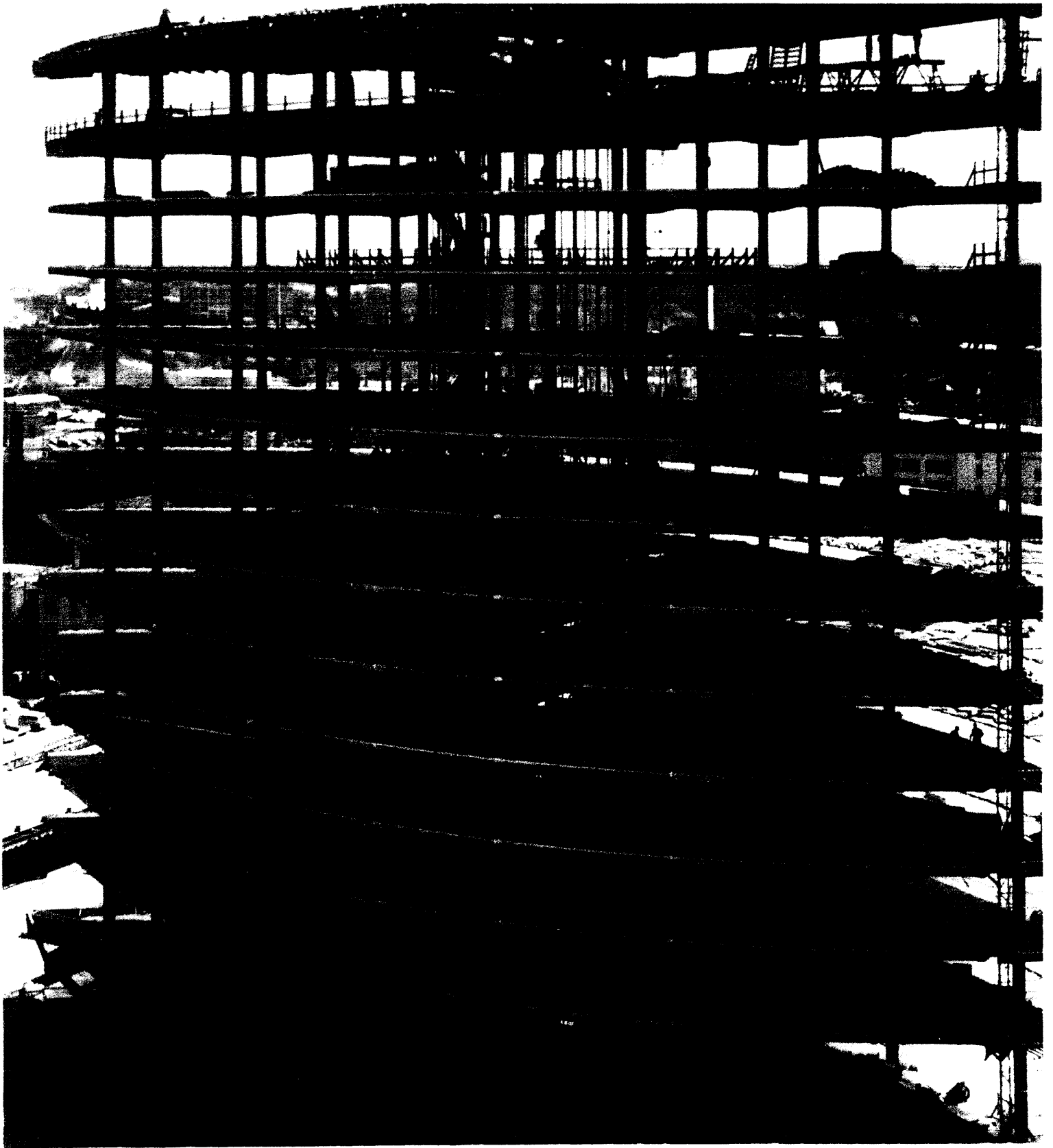
Approx. Scale: 1" = 100'

Bold Line: National Register Boundary



PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT B: SITE PLAN: CONSTITUTION PLAZA, 1961  
Reproduced from the *Architectural Record* 135(March 1964), p. 180



**PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

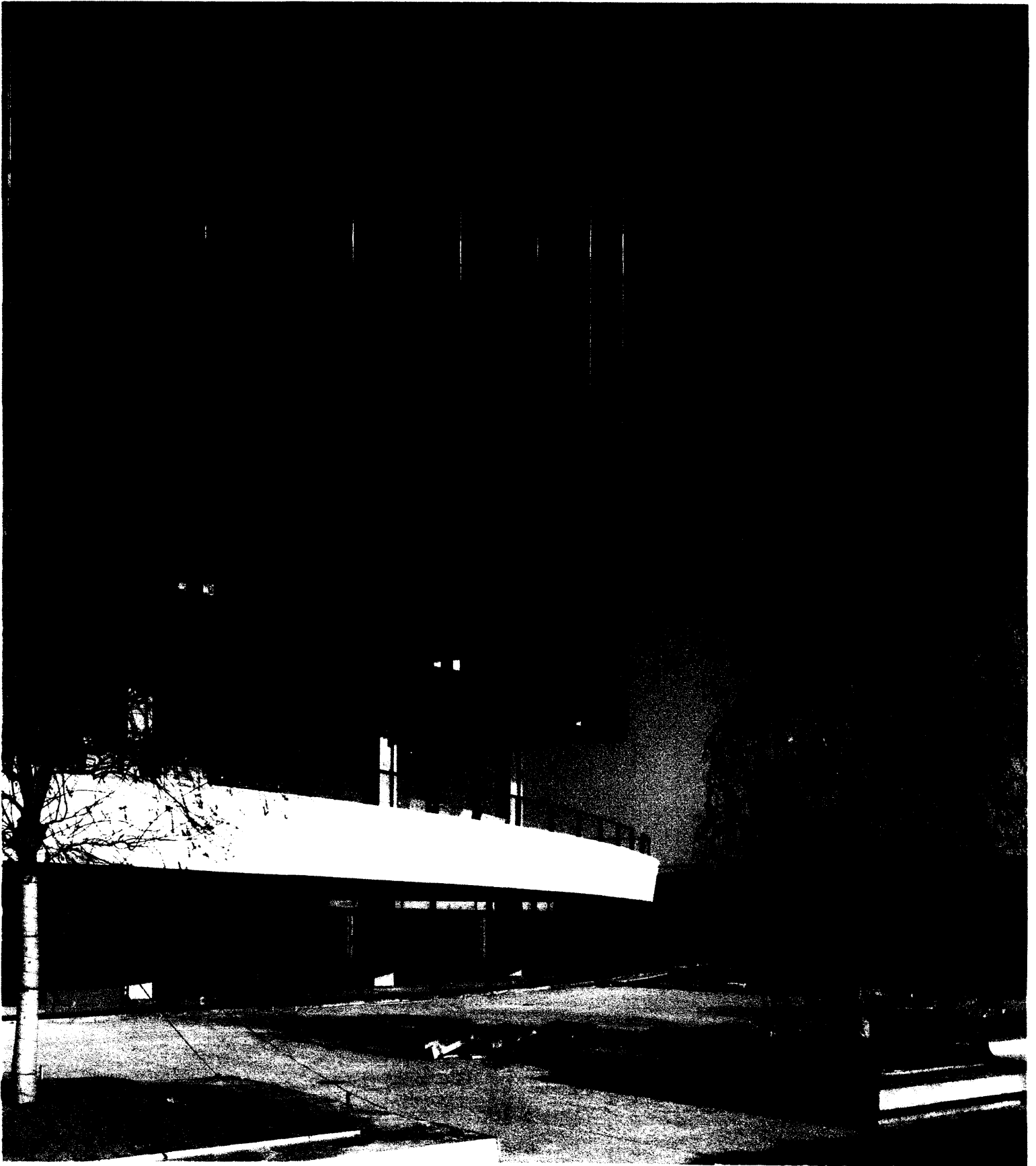
**EXHIBIT C: View of Steel Frame, 1962, camera facing SE**  
(courtesy of Phoenix Life Insurance Company)



**PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

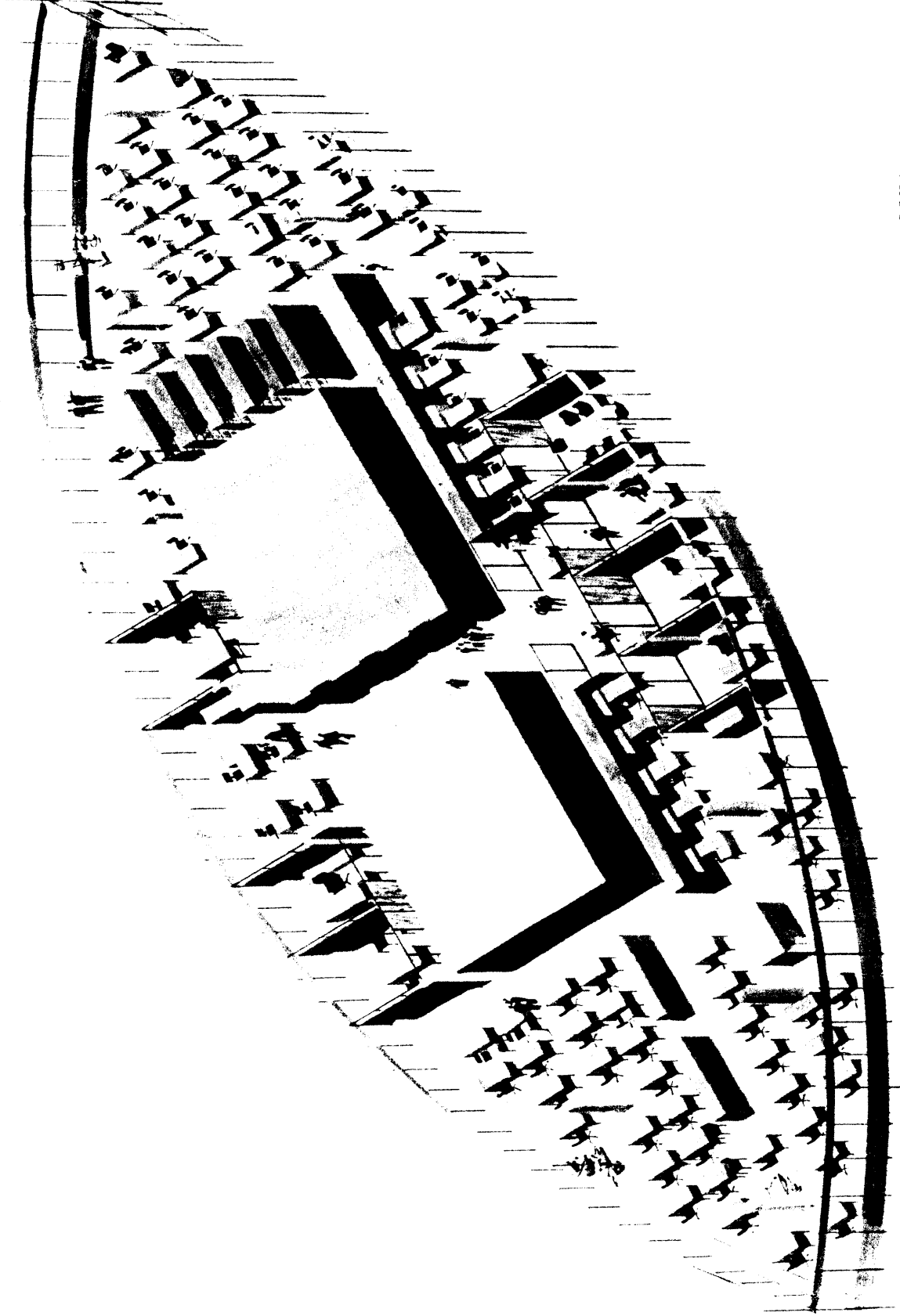
**EXHIBIT D: Aerial View of Construction Site, camera facing NE,  
July, 1962 (courtesy of Phoenix Life Insurance Company)**





**PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

**EXHIBIT E: View of Courtyard under Construction, 1963**  
*(courtesy of Phoenix Life Insurance Company)*



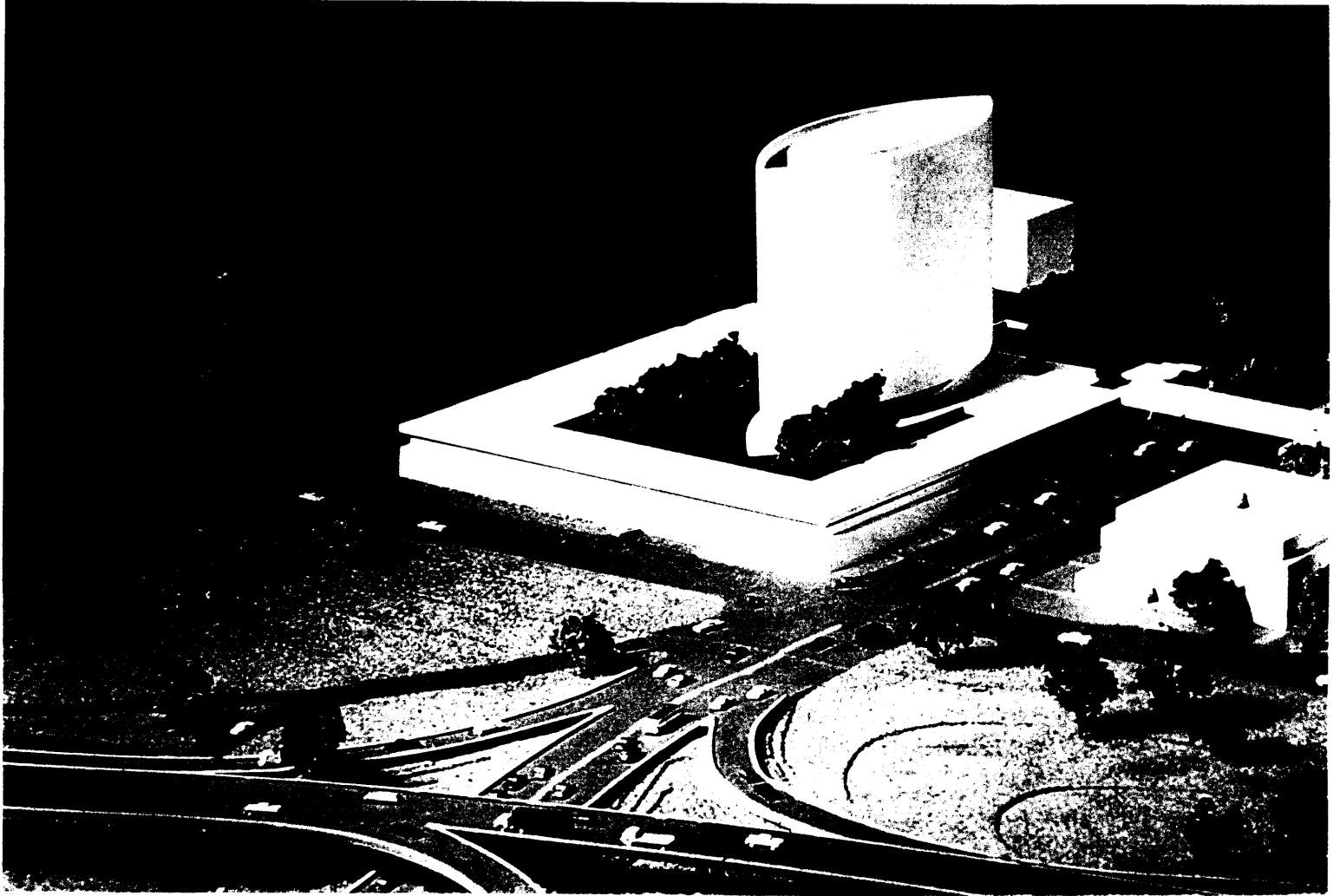
PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT F: Layout of Typical Office Floor (rendering), 1961  
(courtesy of Phoenix Life Insurance Company)



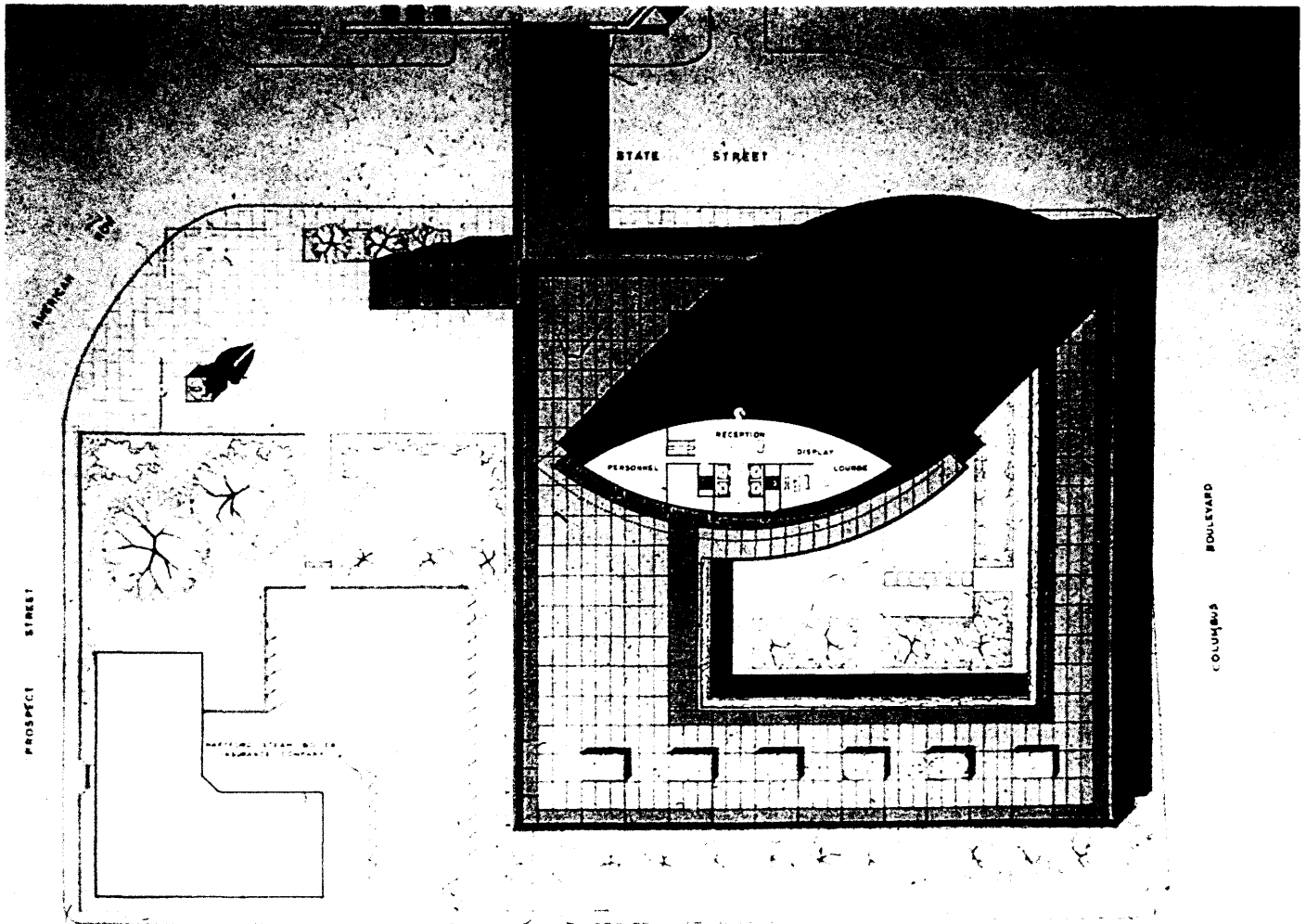
PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT G: View of Typical Office Floor, 1963  
*(courtesy of Phoenix Life Insurance Company)*



**PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

**EXHIBIT H: View of Architectural Model, February 1961**  
(reproduced from *A Wealth of History*, p. 61)



PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT I: Architectural Rendering of Site Plan, 1961  
(reproduced from *A Wealth of History*, p. 60)



PHOENIX LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
Hartford, Hartford County, CT

EXHIBIT J: View of Cafeteria, camera facing SE, Photographer: Joseph W. Molitor, 1963  
(courtesy of *Phoenix Life Insurance Company*)