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OMB No. 1024-0018

0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

**CODE:** 201

United	States	Department	of	the	Interior
Nation	al Park	Service			

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

866

SEP 18 2009

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

#### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Farnsworth & Chambers Building

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Gragg Building

#### 2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 2999 South Wayside

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: Texas CODE: TX

**COUNTY:** Harris

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

VICINITY: N/A

**ZIP CODE:** 77023

#### 3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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 ( <u>x</u> meets) (_does not meet) the National
Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant $(\underline{x} \text{ nationally})$ ( $\underline{x} \text{ locally}$ ). ( $\underline{x} \text{ locally}$ ). ( $\underline{x} \text{ locally}$ ).
additional comments.)
9/11/09
Signature of certifying official // Date
$\nu$
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the propertymeetsdoes 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
4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION
WANTONIE THICK SERVICE CERTIFICATION
I hereby certify that this property is:    Signature of the Keeper   Date of Action
ventered in the National Register vanda My Cullum 10-29-09
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):

TOTAL

#### 5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building** 

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	Noncontributing	
	1	0	BUILDINGS
	0	0	SITES
	0	0	<b>STRUCTURES</b>
	1	0	<b>OBJECTS</b>

2

0

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

#### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: COMMERCE/business; GOVERNMENT/government office

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** GOVERNMENT/government office

#### 7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MODERN MOVEMENT/Wrightian

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE

WALLS STONE and STUCCO OTHER; ASPHALT

OTHER WOOD

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-7)

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### **Architectural Description: Summary**

The 1956 Farnsworth & Chambers building is a one-story, reinforced concrete commercial building with horizontal emphasis and detailing reminiscent of Mesoamerican architecture, with battered stone walls and corbelled *porte cochere* canopy. One of Houston's leading construction firms of the time, the Farnsworth & Chambers Co., Inc., engaged the Houston architectural firm MacKie & Kamrath to design the building for their suburban headquarters. The building's location five miles southeast of downtown reflects the national trend after World War II to locate corporate headquarters outside of the city's core and in this case to locate it near Houston's first completed interstate highway, the Gulf Freeway.

#### Location

The Farnsworth & Chambers building is located at 2999 South Wayside in southeast Houston, one-half mile southwest of the Gulf Freeway. The nearest major intersection, South Wayside and Wheeler, is approximately 500 feet to the north. Telephone Road, named after the location of the first telephone line in the city, is located about a quarter-mile to the east.

The surrounding area is a mix of residential neighborhoods nestled behind commercial strip developments fronting the freeway. Located 1.3 miles to the northwest is "The Orange Show" (NRHP, 2006), a folk art environment dedicated to the orange created by retired mail carrier Jeff McKissack from 1968 until his death in 1980. Forest Park Cemetery is located approximately one half-mile to the northeast; baseball players, politicians, musicians and film and television stars are among those interred there. Not far from the cemetery at the corner of Lawndale and South Wayside is the Villa de Matel, the congregational motherhouse for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

The setting of the Farnsworth & Chambers building is suburban and park-like yet it is adjacent to major traffic arteries. The site consists of the building, sidewalks, mature trees and the original sign set in the grassy median separated from the building by the semi-circular shaped driveway. The sign, sensitively adapted by the current owner, retains its original materials and design elements and is considered a contributing object to this nomination.

#### Overall aesthetic

Designed by the Houston architectural firm MacKie & Kamrath, the one-story, reinforced concrete commercial building has clearly defined layers of materials that all enforce its horizontality. The lower battered concrete wall splays out to meet the ground. Above is an angled vertical mass clad with green quartzite stone laid in an uncoursed ledge rock pattern. Inset above the stone is a narrow band of continuous metal casement windows topped with a wide canopy supported by heavy, stylized angular brackets. Atop the canopy is a second horizontal concrete plane topped with an overhanging band of copper flashing that creates a strong horizontal band at the level of the flat roof. This composition of angled and vertical planes mimics *talud-tablero*, a "slope-and-panel" composition commonly seen in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican pyramid sites in Central Mexico. The grid plan is composed of two parallel north-to-south and two east-to-west corridors intersecting at right angles. These corridors branch out from an interior courtyard, featuring landscaping designed by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mod, Anna, et al, The Orange Show, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Find a Grave "Forest Park Cemetery" (accessed November 10, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Texas Historical Commission Historic Sites, "Villa de Matel," (accessed November 10, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The rough-faced course stone of the majority of the building is a green quartzite, a metamorphic rock that was once a sandstone. The window sills are Serpentinite, a metamorphic rock.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

noted American landscape architect Garret Eckbo (see Figures 1 and 2). At the end of each corridor, battered walls anchor the rows of ribbon windows between them. All of these elements are repeated on each façade of the building.

#### West elevation

The primary façade faces west onto South Wayside Drive and includes the semi-circular driveway and a wide projecting porte cochere. The west façade is asymmetrical and divided into six bays. The first and sixth bays anchor this façade and are each composed of a battered green quartzite wall set on top of the splayed concrete base. The two angled walls are mirror images. The second bay, slightly recessed from the first, is composed of the layers repeated throughout the building starting with the splayed concrete curb, uncoursed serpentinite ledge, metal ribbon windows, wooden canopy and horizontal concrete band with copper flashing. The ribbon windows are divided by the stylized brackets and give this bay its nine-bay composition with an A-B-B-B-B-B-B-B-C pattern. The third, fourth and fifth bays include the porte cochere and building entrance flanked by battered uncoursed stone walls. The building entrance in the fourth bay is set back from the third bay.

The *porte cochere* roof is clad with five rows of painted rough-sawn cypress clapboards, juttying out in Mesoamerican-like corbelling, a monumental version of the window canopy detailing on the building. The *porte cochere* roof continues the copper flashing band of the main roof and is supported by two large angled piers clad in the same mint-colored stone as the battered walls of the building. One stylized wooden knee bracket on each pier provides the visual reassurance that the large projecting roof is firmly resting on the piers. The piers rest in a small concrete flower bed framed with a splayed concrete curb.

The building entrance is recessed under the *porte cochere*. There is a set of low concrete steps with limestone treads leading to a limestone-floored landing. The splayed concrete motif is repeated in the low, stylized porch stoops on either side of the steps. Beyond each stoop, the splayed concrete base of the building surrounds planter boxes. The entrance is composed of floor-to-ceiling aluminum-framed window walls and a paired entry door, a modernist interpretation of the entry door and sidelights. The entrance is offset with three of the floor-to-ceiling window walls to the left of the double doors and a narrower floor-to-ceiling window on the right. The pattern is A-A-A-B-B-C. A Texas Red (pink) granite cornerstone dated 1956 to the left of the entrance is original to the building.

#### South elevation

The four-bay south façade is composed of two of the corridor ends (bays one and three) jutting out and defining a deeply inset void or courtyard of the typical canopied, ribbon windowed composition (bay two). The first bay is composed of three bays defined by the two brackets that support the canopy over a single aluminum framed glass door with sidelights. The third bay is similar in composition yet is divided into five bays by the four brackets supporting the canopy. The walls on either side of bays one and three continue the typical ribbon windowed composition. The fourth bay is a continuation of the ribbon windowed composition.

#### **East elevation**

The east or rear façade has a five-bay composition with three long horizontal planes (bays one, three and five) and two short projecting bays that correspond to the east-to-west corridors (bays two and four). The central recessed courtyard (bay three) on this façade features the building's rear entrance. Four low concrete steps with a pea gravel finish lead to the entrance landing. The entrance canopy is of the same style and materials as the *porte cochere* and window canopies; it is supported by two metal lally columns. The paired entrance doors are aluminum-framed, single-light glass and set in the center of the stone wall.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### North elevation

The north façade is a close mirror image to the south façade; only the left wing jutting forward is a slightly different alignment to its south façade counterpart. There is a service entrance dock composed of two stone walls surrounding a loading dock. There is a small asphalt vehicular road, and a turning area leads to the service dock, which is not original to the building.

#### Interior

The building layout allowed the firm to separate its departments by function and allowed natural light into interior spaces. Administrative functions, including the offices of Richard Farnsworth and Dunbar Chambers, Sr., symbolically occupied the central core of the building, and their purchasing and leasable spaces were located in the southern two wings. Estimating and accounting took up the wings that protruded to the east, and the northernmost extension of the building was occupied by heavy engineering. The executive offices of Farnsworth & Chambers were located on opposing north-south hallways.<sup>5</sup>

Architects MacKie & Kamrath provided ample fenestration in public areas that emphasizes the building's connection to the outdoors. The main entrance, the dining areas and the primary interior corridors have plate glass window walls and aluminum framed glass doors. Office areas have a ribbon of steel casement and fixed windows at eyelevel when standing.

Many of the interior wall surfaces are wood paneling as was fashionable at the time of construction. Rubber tiles comprised the floor coverings in the hallways while offices contained asphalt floor tiles. Higher-end materials were used in more notable spaces as in the slate tile flooring in Chambers' office and in the adjoining large conference room. Restroom and kitchen floors are terrazzo. Farnsworth had the sole carpeted floor in the building.

Acoustic ceiling tiles with recessed can lighting can be found throughout the building. Most interior doors are wooden with metal louvers that served as return air ducts. Additional return air vents, disguised as wooden wall sculptures, are at the junction of the crossing both east/west axes on the north/south corridor. Doors to the exterior are aluminum narrow-framed glass doors with aluminum pulls.

#### **Design summary**

MacKie & Kamrath's design has a distinct aesthetic likely inspired by Mesoamerican *talud-tablero* building practices and their modern applications in American architecture, including Frank Lloyd Wright's Maya-inspired designs, namely Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. The battered stone walls and long bands of windows emphasize the horizontality of the building. The *porte cochere* and window canopies show a modern treatment of traditional building elements.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> MacKie & Kamrath Architectural Drawings for Office Building for Farnsworth & Chambers, October 29, 1954. Drawn by A.E.H., Checked and stamped by F. MacKie, Jr.

#### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- $\underline{X}$  **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
  - **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X C PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, 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: G

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE; OTHER/space exploration

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1956; 1962-1964

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1956; 1962

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A** 

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: MacKie & Kamrath, architects; Garret Eckbo, landscape architect; Farnsworth &

Chambers, general contractor.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-15)

#### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-16 through 9-17)

#### PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- \_ 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 #

#### PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

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

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### Summary statement of significance

The Farnsworth & Chambers building, completed in 1956 by the eponymous company, was designed by MacKie & Kamrath, Houston's leading modernist followers of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural principles. The most significant part of the building's history is its use as the headquarters for NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston while the Clear Lake campus—later named Johnson Space Center—was being designed and constructed. The building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, with significance at the national level, as the headquarters building from 1962 to 1964 of NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center during the Mercury program. At this national level of significance, the property meets includes Criteria Consideration G for properties that have obtained significance in the past 50 years. The building is also nominated under Criterion C, Architecture, as an example of the work of MacKie & Kamrath, Houston's modernist adherents to Frank Lloyd Wright's design ideology. As part of their larger canon of work that includes a range of design choices including Prairie Style, the Farnsworth & Chambers building best exhibits a regional adaptation of Wright's organic and Mayan-influenced projects, such as Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. The two periods of significance reflect the two criteria under which the property is nominated: 1956 for Criterion C and 1962 to 1964 for Criterion A.

#### **Site Context**

In 1948, the initial 3.7-mile section of Interstate 45, Houston's first freeway, linked the Houston's Central Business District to Telephone Road connecting the southeastern suburbs to additional employment opportunities downtown. Houston met wartime demands for materiel in the early 1940s with the expansion of industry along the Ship Channel, and the resulting infrastructure, factories, plants and warehouses were easily adapted to suit peacetime enterprises. Developers sought to fill the housing void by constructing affordable single-family residences in southeast Houston in proximity to employment centers. Postwar home buying was relatively easy, requiring only a small down payment and financing through the Federal Housing Authority or the Department of Veteran's Affairs. Petrochemical production in nearby Texas City was crucial to the war effort, and the framework was in place for postwar economic prosperity. Planners recognized that communities between Houston and Galveston would swell and eventually create a continuous urban corridor between the two cities. By 1952, Interstate 45—known locally as the Gulf Freeway—was completed, connecting many of the inland communities housing refinery workers to Houston and Galveston.

#### **Farnsworth & Chambers Contractors**

Farnsworth & Chambers was a Houston-based construction company that worked regionally in the southwest and Louisiana, and Central America. At the height of their prosperity they constructed buildings, bridges, pipelines, petrochemical plants, refineries and tunnels. Their assets included ranches, land and three company planes.

The Farnsworth & Chambers company traces its roots back to Louisiana. The Farnsworths were a Kentucky family whose ties to the construction industry go back to the 1850s. They relocated to New Orleans and established Farnsworth & Co., Inc. During the Great Depression, Richard Farnsworth noticed a young man on scaffold painting a ceiling with paint streaming down his arms. As the superintendent, Farnsworth approached the painter, Dunbar Chambers, Sr. and suggested

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> City of Houston Department of Traffic and Transportation. Economic Evaluation of the Gulf Freeway, Houston, Texas, p. 4.

Houston City Planning Commission. Comprehensive Plan – Houston Urban Area. Background for Plan 1c: Population, Land Use and Growth. 1958, p. 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Planning Commission, p. 52-54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> McComb, David. Houston: A History. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. p.124.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

he use "elbow cups" to catch the excess paint. Farnsworth grew to admire Chambers' work ethic as he worked part-time for a painting subcontractor while attending Louisiana State University. Dunbar Chambers went to work for the R.P. Farnsworth Construction Company as a mason's helper after attending Louisiana State University and was quick to rise in the company. The pair worked on several military base construction projects in Texas during World War II, and in 1944, they were sent to Houston to start a new office. Within two years, Richard Farnsworth bought out his shares of the company and partnered with Chambers to form the Farnsworth & Chambers Company in 1945.

When Farnsworth and Chambers established themselves in Houston at the end of WWII, their office at 3018 Leeland Street was considered suburban. This address was on the industrialized eastern side of downtown that paralleled the ship channel and was only blocks from the future Interstate 45. The relocation of commercial and industrial business to a suburban location following expanding ship channel industry would be a trend in Houston for years to come.

Farnsworth & Chambers offered a diverse list of services even for an era before construction companies began specializing in particular areas of the industry. They built commercial buildings, industrial plants, sewers, pipelines, pump stations, schools, stadiums, churches, public housing, military bases, hospitals, roads, bridges, wharfs, dams, tunnels and foundations. Their building projects ranged in scale from small renovations which cost tens of thousands of dollars to massive undertakings such as the 1954 Kelly Field Hangar—reportedly the largest airplane hanger in the world when built—in San Antonio for \$12 million. Their heavy construction division was just as broad in scope. A company brochure from 1954 lists a land clearing job completed for Shell Oil Company for \$9,488 while they constructed the South Broad Overpass for the City of New Orleans for close to \$3.5 million.

The built legacy of the Farnsworth & Chambers Company can be found on higher education campuses throughout the Southwest and Louisiana. Tulane University in New Orleans has three Farnsworth & Chambers-constructed buildings, including the University Center (1959, Curtis and Davis, Architects), Robert Sharp Hall (1960, Koch and Wilson, Diboll, Kessels, Architects), and the Patterson House (1953, Koch and Wilson, Architects). Farnsworth & Chambers also built Austin College's Jackson Technology Center in Sherman, Texas (1951, Peyton G. Cooper, Architect), and in Albuquerque, the University of New Mexico's Student Union (1959, Meem, Holien, Buckley and Assoc, Architects).<sup>13</sup>

When the 1954 M.D. Anderson Building in Houston's Texas Medical Center project went out for bid in 1950, the lowest bid came in at \$7.5 million. Dunbar Chambers worked with the Board of Regents to bring the cost down to the anticipated price of \$5.25 million by suggesting a series of alternatives that would allow the building to be constructed as originally envisioned only if funds became available. Chambers agreed to hold his bid price of \$7.5 million for one year. M.D. Anderson was able to raise the funds in 18 months, and Chambers honored the original price, an extraordinary feat considering the materials cost rise at the outset of the Korean War. He is credited with helping realize the dream of bringing a first-class cancer hospital to Houston, a legacy that continues to have a major impact on the medical field and the local economy.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Houston City Directory "Farnsworth & Chambers Co." (Houston: R.L. Polk & Co., 1946–1957).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Chambers, Jr., Dunbar. Telephone interviewed by Jay Hrivnatz and Anna Mod, October 1, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Tulane University, s.v. "Alumni/Potpourri of History/VII: Buildings" http://alumni.tulane.edu/potpourri/index.html (accessed March 10, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Chapman, Dave, "Farnsworth & Chambers History: The Building of M.D. Anderson Hospital" (December 27, 1996): quoted in N. Don Macon *Clark and the Anderson: A Personal Profile* (Published by The Texas Medical Center, 1976).

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Farnsworth & Chambers hired the local Houston architectural firm MacKie & Kamrath to design their headquarters building at 3601 Brock Avenue, the southwestern corner of the Farnsworth & Chambers Building block. Prior to the move the company maintained an office for 11 years southeast of downtown at 3018 Leeland Street. The move reflects a preference in the late 1950s for a suburban corporate setting in close proximity to a freeway as opposed to a location downtown. The building is located approximately 4.5 miles southeast of downtown Houston in a post-World War II suburban area whose development was encouraged by the completion of the Gulf Freeway in 1952. Another determinant of the buildings' location is its proximity to Hobby Airport. As the geography of their work expanded, the need for rapid executive transportation increased. Farnsworth & Chambers leased a hanger at Hobby Airport where they kept three planes: a Cessna, a DC-3 and a Douglas A-26. The building opened in 1957 and the Brock Avenue address was later changed to 2999 South Wayside after the connection of that street to the Gulf Freeway.

When Richard Farnsworth and Dunbar Chambers commissioned the design of their South Wayside headquarters in 1954, they were among Houston's biggest contractors. Their main competitors were Bellows and Brown & Root. They had established themselves as leading regional builders of hospitals, schools, underground utilities and roads. They extended their reach into Central America with roadway construction projects and the building of the San Pedro Sula Airport in Honduras. <sup>16</sup> Chambers was killed in a hunting accident in October 1956. <sup>17</sup>

Chambers' death and company legal woes led to the company selling its headquarters within a few years of completion, but the Farnsworth & Chambers story continued in the numerous individuals who went on to start their own construction companies (Figure 3). Al Jensen, a Rice alumnus, worked for Farnsworth & Chambers after graduation and co-founded a construction firm with H.A. Lott, who had helped train Dunbar Chambers, Jr. H.A. Lott, Inc. constructed such significant buildings as the Astrodome and San Antonio's Riverwalk. James D. "Doug" Pitcock, Jr., a 1949 Texas A&M graduate began as a purchasing agent for Farnsworth & Chambers. In 1955 he became a co-founder, partner, president and CEO of Williams Brothers Construction, which became one of the largest highway construction firms in the country. <sup>18 19</sup> Gerald Lyda joined Farnsworth & Chambers in 1947 when the firm was constructing the University of Texas Memorial Stadium. Lyda was mentored by H.A. Lott at Farnsworth & Chambers, and in 1960 he co-founded Darragh & Lyda, Inc. who partnered with Lott's firm to build four of the most notable buildings for the 1968 HemisFair in San Antonio. Lyda's company became one of the largest general contracting firms in Texas whose projects include the Alamodome, Fiesta Texas, the Westin Riverwalk Hotel and Diamond Shamrock's corporate headquarters.<sup>20</sup>

Benson Ford studied architecture at Rice at the time of the construction of the Farnsworth & Chambers building and assisted Dunbar Chambers, Sr., in the conceptualization and programming of the building. Ford joined the company as a carpenter during the construction of the M.D. Anderson Building. He worked summers in construction and during the school year he worked part-time as an estimator. He graduated in 1954 and went on to obtain a Master of Fine Arts from Princeton in 1955. After returning to Farnsworth & Chambers, his first major project was construction superintendent of the Gulf Gate Shopping Center, approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the Farnsworth & Chambers Building.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Chambers, Jr., Dunbar and Dave Chapman interview by Jay Hrivnatz and Anna Mod, October 30, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Chambers, Jr., Dunbar. Telephone interviewed by Jay Hrivnatz and Anna Mod, October 1, 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Dallas Morning News, "Hunting Mishap Fatal to Houston Business Leader," October 28, 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Texas A&M University, s.v. "ENGINEERING NEWS, 1791, 4 APRIL 2008," (accessed September 19, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Feldstein, Dan "King of the Road," Houston Chronicle, April 26, 1998, Section A, page 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> La Escalera Ranch, s.v. "THE LEGACY [of Gerald Lyda]," http://www.escalera.us/legacy.html (accessed September 19, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ford, Benson interview by Jay Hrivnatz, November 03, 2008.

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### L.O. Gragg

Oil drilling magnate Lee Oscar Gragg purchased the Farnsworth & Chambers building in 1961 as a real estate investment. His firm, W.D. York and Gragg Drilling, never occupied the building, instead leasing it to various tenants, including NASA. Gragg completed a ten-year run of land acquisition in the vicinity in 1970. Occupants included the Stran Steel Corporation, National Steel Corporation (1970–1974) and Cactus Petroleum, Inc., Cactus Transport and F&C Equipment (1960–1976). Gragg sold the building and donated the surrounding acreage to the City of Houston in 1976.

#### **NASA** and Project Mercury

The most significant part of the Farnsworth & Chambers building's history is its use as the headquarters for the Manned Spacecraft Center (MSC) in Houston while the Clear Lake campus was being designed and constructed. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) began in October 1958, absorbing the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics and other government agencies. Based largely at Virginia's Langley Research Center, which had been established in 1917 as an aeronautics testing center, NASA immediately set out to create a space exploration program with Project Mercury and the Space Task Group.<sup>22</sup>

The Mercury program had three primary objectives: to place a manned spacecraft in orbital flight around the Earth, to investigate the impact of space conditions, such as zero- or low-gravity, on human functions and capabilities, and recover both the spacecraft and its passenger safely. Authorized in 1958, Project Mercury sought to "[develop] more sophisticated spacecraft which will carry trained scientific observers into orbit around the earth and on interplanetary flights." In 1961, NASA chose for its new headquarters land in Clear Lake donated by Rice University; the 1,000-acre tract was called Site 1. While Site 1 was being developed, NASA had several satellite offices in the vicinity of South Wayside for personnel and laboratories. Its headquarters for the MSC and Mercury program were in the Farnsworth & Chambers Building, designated "Site 2," from 1962–1964. Mercury astronauts including Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, John Glenn, Gus Grissom, Wally Schirra, Alan Shepard and Deke Slayton as well as project director Robert Rowe Gilruth maintained offices in the building. At this time, no other facilities primarily associated with Project Mercury are known to be listed in the National Register. Head of the space of the properties of the space of the National Register.

The political maneuvering necessary to bring the MSC to Houston was largely orchestrated by Albert Thomas (1898–1966), a 15-term Congressman from Houston and Harris County's Eighth District. Houston was among several other contenders including Jacksonville, Florida (Green Cove Springs Naval Station); Tampa, Florida (MacDill Air Force Base); Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Shreveport, Louisiana (Barksdale Air Force Base); Victoria, Texas (FAA Airport); Corpus Christi, Texas (Naval Air Station); San Diego, California (Camp Elliott); and San Francisco, California (Benicia Ordnance Depot). Paperific site criteria were developed to facilitate the search. "The site required access to water transportation by large barges, a moderate climate, availability of all-weather commercial jet service, a well-established industrial complex with supporting technical facilities and labor, close proximity to a culturally attractive community in the vicinity of an institution of higher education, a strong electric utility and water supply, at least 1,000 acres of land, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Langley Research Center History, http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/about/history.html (accessed July 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Project Mercury Overview, http://www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/history/mercury/mercury-overview.htm (accessed July 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> National Aeronautical and Space Administration, Manned Spacecraft Center Bulletin, Winter 1962.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Houston Magazine, "Houston Welcomes MSC," August, 1962.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> NATIONAL REGISTER INFORMATION SYSTEM, http://www.nr.nps.gov/nrname1.htm (accessed Spring 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Houston Post, "NASA Center: Houston Met all Requirements, But Envy Dies Hard," March 11, 1962.

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

certain specified cost parameters."<sup>28</sup> Houston actually came in second place to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa because the Air Force planned to close its Strategic Air Command operations there. In third place was the Benicia Ordnance Depot in the San Francisco Bay Area. Before a decision and public announcement was made, the Air Force decided not to close McDill and thus Houston moved to first place. The needed 1,000 acres of land was committed by Rice University and was once part of the estate of James Marion West (1871–1941), a Houston banker and publisher.

#### Temporary NASA facilities in southwest Houston, 1962–1964<sup>29</sup>

Building Name	NASA Site #	Location	NASA Function	Current Use
Farnsworth &	2	2999 S.	Headquarters	Gragg Building. City of Houston Parks and
Chambers Building Rich Fan Company Building	3	Wayside 6040 Telephone Road	Spacecraft Research Division and Systems Evaluation and Development Division	Ambox Corporation
Lane-Wells Building	4	2002 Wayside	Life Systems Division	St. Austin Center (community center)
Stahl and Myers Building	5	5945 Gulf Freeway	Flight Operations Division	Vacant
East End State Band Building	6	4200 Leeland St.	Personnel Offices and Credit Union	City of Houston Utility Customer Service.
Minneapolis- Honeywell Building	9	5440 Gulf Freeway	Public Affairs	Vacant
Canada Dry Bottling Plant	10	4750 Gulf Freeway	Technical Services Division	Roberts Carpet
KHOU-TV	11	4513 Cullen	Data Computation and Reduction Division	Channel 8 KUHT

Four NASA-affiliated resources in the Houston area are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: The James and Jessie West Mansion (NR 1994, state level of significance), the Johnson Space Center Apollo Mission Control Center (NR 1985, National Historic Landmark), Saturn V Launch Vehicle (NR 2003, national level of significance), and Johnson

<sup>28</sup> Dethloff, Henry C. <u>Suddenly Tomorrow Came: A History of the Johnson Space Center</u>. Washington D. C.: United States Government Printing, 1994.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Swenson Jr, Loyd S., James M. Grimwood, and Charles C. Alexander, NASA History Division, "This New Ocean: A History of Project Mercury (Space Task Group Gets a New Home and Name)," http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4201/ch12-3.htm (accessed Fall 2008). Site 1 designation given to 1,000-acre Clear Lake site chosen in 1961, and construction of the Manned Spacecraft Center completed there in 1963. Today that site is known as Johnson Space Center.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Space Center Space Environment Simulation Laboratory (NR 1985, National Historic Landmark). James West, an east Texas timber tycoon, commissioned his two-story masonry villa in 1929. It was designed by renowned architect Joseph Finger and completed in 1930. After West's death, Rice University bought the mansion. In 1969 it was renovated for \$580,000 and leased to the Lunar and Planetary Institute, an institute that provided NASA with outreach in the scientific community on lunar and planetary research and terrestrial programs through visiting scholar programs, workshops, seminars and publications. The institute occupied the mansion until 1991. Later in the 1990s, the mansion was sold to former Houston Rockets basketball player Hakeem Olajuwon and is currently threatened by demolition.

The Apollo Mission Control Center in Building 30 at the JSC Manned Space Flight Center monitored nine Gemini and all Apollo flights, including Apollo 11 that first landed men on the moon. The Space Environment Simulation Laboratory in building 32 at the JSC and was designed, built and used to conduct thermal-vacuum testing for all United States manned spacecraft of the Apollo-era. The Space Environment Simulation Laboratory tested all Apollo command and service modules, Apollo lunar modules, space suits for extra-vehicular activity, the Skylab/Apollo telescope mount system, various Space Shuttle systems, the Apollo/Soyuz docking module, and various large-scale scientific satellite systems. The Saturn V Launch Vehicle is one of only three intact Saturn V rockets in the United States, and as the only example made of components intended to fly on Apollo missions. <sup>31</sup>

#### **Recent History**

In 1976, the City of Houston purchased the South Wayside property, moving its Parks and Recreation Department moved into what became known as the Gragg Building in 1977. Prior to this move, the city department had various sections of its operations in scattered remote locations. The move marked the first time all sections were housed in one central location. Oilman L.O. Gragg donated the 15.67 acres of land surrounding the building with the provision that five acres be reserved as a green area to be named Gragg Park.

The Farnsworth & Chambers Building is currently unoccupied and is undergoing a sensitive rehabilitation led by Harrison Kornberg Architects of Houston. The exterior rehabilitation is in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings. Hazardous materials abatement was completed during the summer of 2008 and construction is anticipated to begin in October 2008 with a proposed completion date of October 2009. The project team has reviewed the plans with the City of Houston Preservation Officer Randy Pace and Elizabeth Butman of the Texas Historical Commission. Designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in January 2009, the project will be submitted formally for review by Texas Historical Commission in compliance with the RTHL process.

#### MacKie & Kamrath

MacKie & Kamrath was one of the first Houston firms to design modernist buildings and their designs quickly attained national recognition. Karl Fred Kamrath (1911–1988) was born in Enid, Oklahoma and Frederick James MacKie, Jr. (1905–1984) was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Both graduated from the University of Texas in the early 1930s and each found his way to the architectural proving ground of Chicago after graduation. Kamrath first worked for architects Pereira and Pereira, then The Interior Studios of Marshall Field & Company and the Architectural Decorating Company. MacKie worked for Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, one of the nation's largest firms, before joining the Architectural

<sup>31</sup> Harry A. Butowsky, "Man in Space: National Historic Landmark Theme Study" (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1984).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Texas Historical Commission, Historic Sites Atlas, http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/. Nominations reviewed: James and Jessie West Mansion, Johnson Space Center Apollo Mission Control Center and Johnson Space Center Space Environment Simulation Laboratory, (accessed November, 2008).

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Decorating Company where he was reunited with Karl Kamrath. They were unhappy there, and, after discovering that Houston had not been hit as severely as other cities by the Great Depression, they returned to Texas in 1937 to establish their own firm.<sup>32, 33</sup>

Examples of the firm's early work include a house for Kamrath's family (1939), the City of Houston Fire Alarm Building (1939, demolished), the Covington and Kivlin houses (1941, 1942), and San Felipe Courts (1942, 1944, NR 1988) a large federal housing project near downtown Houston. Kamrath followed the ideals of Frank Lloyd Wright before meeting him in 1946. The firm's subsequent work as seen in the Farnsworth & Chambers building represents a continuation of following Wright's Usonian architectural ideals.<sup>34</sup> The Farnsworth & Chambers building is a clear example of the influence of Wrights' horizontal emphasis and the use of the stone-faced walls as exemplified at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona.

MacKie & Kamrath's major buildings in Houston and Texas include Phyllis Wheatley High School (1948), Temple Emanu-El (1949, with Lenard R. Gabert), the Dow Chemical Company complex, Freeport (1953), the Schlumberger Well surveying corporation complex (1953), Humble Research Center located at Buffalo Speedway and Alabama (1954), St. John the Divine Church (1954, with H.A. Salisbury), the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute (1954, with Schmidt, Garden, and Eriksen, altered), the Champlin Oil Company Building, Fort Worth (1956), the Commercial Standard Insurance Company Building, Fort Worth (1956), Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church (1957), Bunker Hill Village (1957, 1974), Temple Rodef Shalom, Waco (1962), the Pasadena State Bank Building, Pasadena (1962, with Doughtie and Porterfield), The Science and Research Building, University of Houston (1968), the Big Three Industries Building (1974), and the University of Texas School of Public Health Building, Houston (1975).

#### **Garret Eckbo**

Landscape architect Garret Eckbo (1910–2000) designed the central atrium and plantings at the Farnsworth & Chambers building. Born in New York, Eckbo was brought up in California and studied landscape architecture at UC Berkeley. After graduation he won a scholarship to study at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) where he, influenced by Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius who taught there, found himself disenchanted with Beaux-Arts formalism. In 1938, Eckbo returned to California and designed hundreds of gardens. His first book *Landscape for Living* (1950) influenced the popularity of the modern garden in the state. He became chairman of the Berkeley Department of Landscape Architecture in 1963 and founded the EDAW practice (Eckbo Dean Austin and Williams) in 1964 and undertook a wide range of large-scale landscape architecture projects (campuses, malls, shopping centers, and regional plans). Eckbo also taught at the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California from 1948–1956.

Talud-Tablero, Mayan Revival, and Frank Lloyd Wright

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "KAMRATH, KARL FRED," http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/KK/fka15.html (accessed March 10, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Miller, Scott Reagan, "The Architecture of MacKie & Kamrath" (Thesis, Rice University, 1993), p. 46–54.

<sup>34</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "KAMRATH, KARL FRED,"

http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/KK/fka15.html (accessed March 10, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Ibid; also Inventory of Karl Kamrath collection (1918–2004), Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas at Austin http://www.houstonarchitecture.com/haif/index.php?showtopic=10882&st=0 (accessed July 2009). 

<sup>36</sup> Garden Visit: The Garden and Landscape Guide, s.v. "GARRET ECKBO." http://www.gardenvisit.com/got/18/eckbo.htm (accessed March 10, 2006).

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

The *talud-tablero* construction method was widely used throughout pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Also called slope-and-panel, it consists of platforms, or *tableros*, set atop sloping walls known as *taludes*. In the 1920s and 1930s, there were several well-known applications of Mayan and other Mesoamerican architectural motifs on commercial and residential buildings. Frank Lloyd Wright designed four notable homes in California that demonstrate his excursions into a Mesoamerican-influenced style, including the 1921 Aline Barnsdall Complex, or Hollyhock House and the 1924 Ennis House. In 1937, Wright completed his influential Taliesin West studio and home. Notable for its response to the rocky site in Scottsdale, Arizona, Taliesin West demonstrates the battered walls and cyclopean masonry often associated with Mesoamerican buildings but goes further in creating a site-specific, organic and truly modern edifice, using the prominent steel ribs of the roof structure as a major design element and capturing—and diffusing—desert light into the building, which was, and is, used for design students and professionals. Part of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Usonian* vision for architecture in the United States was to connect a building's interior to its exterior setting, letting its unique site shape design decisions.<sup>37</sup>

#### Conclusion

The Farnsworth & Chambers Building, completed in 1958, is a tangible example of post-World War II suburban development near the newly constructed Gulf Freeway (Interstate 45) and the trend for new corporate headquarters outside of downtown Houston. The building was first the headquarters for Farnsworth & Chambers, a major construction company that trained many young men who went on to establish large construction firms in their own right and built significant buildings statewide. From 1962 to 1964 the building served as headquarters for the Manned Spacecraft Center (MSC) of the National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA). The building is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of the work of Houston architects MacKie & Kamrath, Houston's mid-century practitioners of the design and theories of Frank Lloyd Wright. The composition of angled and vertical planes mimics *talud-tablero*, the method of construction commonly seen in pre-Hispanic pyramid sites in Central Mexico.

The 1956 Farnsworth & Chambers Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at that national level of significance for its association with NASA from 1962 to 1964. It meets Criteria Consideration G for its exceptional significance as NASA's Manned Space Program headquarters during that period. The building is also nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C as an excellent example of the work of Houston architects MacKie & Kamrath. Listing this City of Houston-owned building on the National Register will further the recognition of the city's heritage and historic buildings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Usonia," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Usonia&oldid=281082646 (accessed April 8, 2009).

#### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES** 

Zone Easting 275878.5

Northing 3288566.0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lot 12D, Subdivision ABST 51 L Moore, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The boundary includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY with assistance from Texas Historical Commission historian Linda Henderson

NAME/TITLE: Anna Mod and Jay Hrivnatz, Historic Preservation Specialists

ORGANIZATION: SWCA Environmental Consultants, Inc.

DATE: 24 November 2008

STREET & NUMBER: 7255 Langtry, Suite 100

**TELEPHONE:** 713-934-9900

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 77040

#### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

#### **CONTINUATION SHEETS**

MAPS (see continuation sheet Maps-18 to Maps-19)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photos-23 to Photos-25)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** (see continuation sheet Figures-20 to Figures-22)

#### PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: City of Houston, Joe Turner, Director of Parks and Recreation Department

STREET & NUMBER: 601 Sawyer

TELEPHONE: 713-845-1000

**CITY OR TOWN:** Houston

STATE: TX

**ZIP CODE:** 77007

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Bibliography Page 16

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Section Bibliography Page 17

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Maps Page 18

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas



City of Houston



## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section Maps Page 19

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### Aerial Photo of Farnsworth & Chambers Building

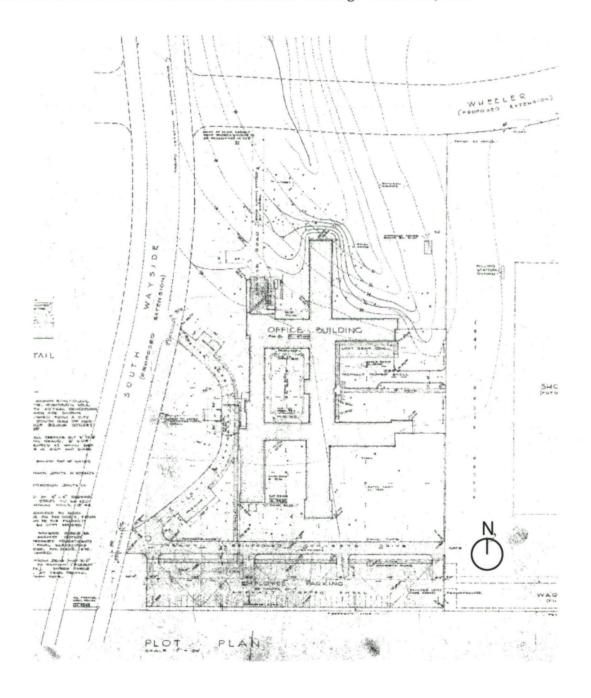


## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figures Page 20

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 1: Site Plan from Mackie & Kamrath construction drawings October 29, 1954

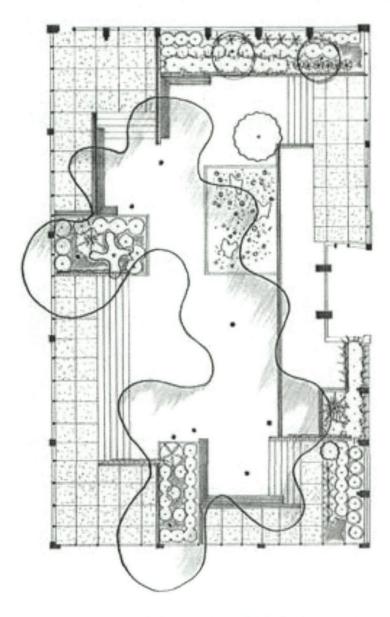


# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figures Page 21

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2: Garrett Eckbo 1956 courtyard plan at Farnsworth & Chambers Building



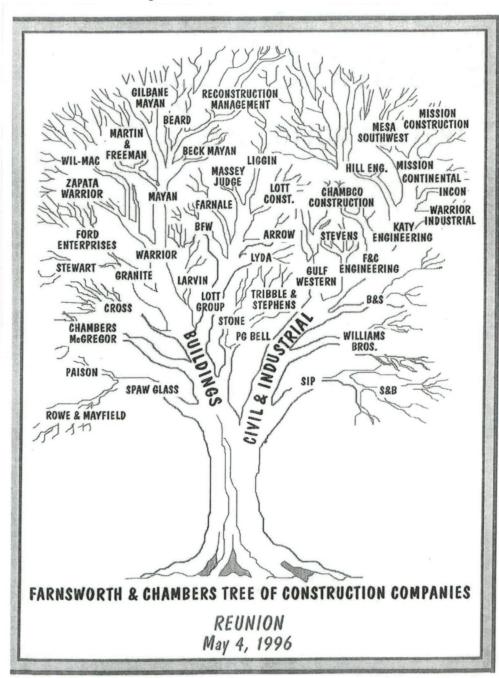
None of the original plantings from Eckbo's plan remain

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figures Page 22

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 3: Farnsworth & Chambers Corporate Tree



## United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

### **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section Photos Page 23

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photograph Log

Farnsworth & Chambers Building 2999 S. Wayside Houston, Harris County, Texas 77023

Photo 1 of 9

Subject: Manned Spacecraft Center Sign with Mercury 7 Astronauts: (left to right: Deke Slayton, Gordon Cooper, Alan Shepard, NASA Manned Spacecraft Director Robert Rowe Gilruth, Scott Carpenter, Wally Schirra, and Gus Grissom.

Photographer: Unknown, View: North, Date: ca. 1962

Negative on file with NASA archives Photograph Call number: S62-00591

Photo 2 of 9

Subject: Manned Spacecraft Center porte cochere with NASA logo

Photographer: Unknown, View: Northeast, Date: ca. 1962

Negative on file with NASA archives Photograph Call number: S62-03939

Photo 3 of 9

Subject: Porte cochere at entrance

Photographer: Hester + Hardaway Photographers, View: Northeast, Date: 2008 Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service

Digital file number: TX HarrisCounty Farnsworth&Chambers0001.tif

Photo 4 of 9

Subject: West wing, south entrance

Photographer: Hester + Hardaway Photographers, View: Northeast, Date: 2008 Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX\_HarrisCounty\_Farnsworth&Chambers0002.tif

Photo 5 of 9

Subject: South wing, east side with north wing in distance

Photographer: Hester + Hardaway Photographers, View: Northwest, Date: 2008 Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX HarrisCounty Farnsworth&Chambers0003.tif

Photo 6 of 9

Subject: South and east wing intersection

Photographer: Hester + Hardaway Photographers, View: Northeast, Date: 2008 Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX\_HarrisCounty\_Farnsworth&Chambers0004.tif

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 24

Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### **Interior photos**

Photo 7 of 9

Subject: Entry foyer

View: view E towards interior courtyard Photographer: Michael Stravato, Date: 2008

Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX HarrisCounty Farnsworth&Chambers0005.tif

Photo 8 of 9

Subject: Entry foyer

View: view N of reception desk; interior courtyard on right

Photographer: Michael Stravato, Date: 2008

Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX HarrisCounty Farnsworth&Chambers0006.tif

Photo 9 of 9

Subject: Interior hallway and view into conference room

View: view N down hallway and into conference room and interior courtyard

Photographer: Michael Stravato, Date: 2008

Digital image on file with Texas Historical Commission and National Park Service Photograph Call number: TX HarrisCounty Farnsworth&Chambers0007.tif

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 25

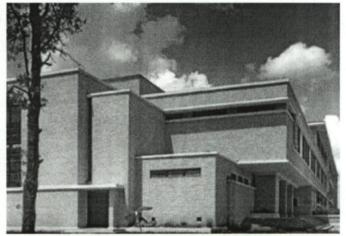
Farnsworth & Chambers Building Houston, Harris County, Texas

#### MacKie & Kamrath designs in Houston exhibit Wright's influence:





Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church Houston (1957)



Phyllis Wheatley Senior High School (1950)

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION
PROPERTY Farnsworth & Chambers Building NAME:
MULTIPLE NAME:
STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Harris
DATE RECEIVED: 9/18/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/05/09 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/20/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/01/09 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:
REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000866
REASONS FOR REVIEW:
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N
COMMENT WAIVER: N
ACCEPTRETURNREJECTDATE ban
exceptionally important at the national level for its exceptionally important at the national level for its rale as the head quarters for Masa's Manned spacecraft center in thousand while the Johnson space levels was being classfred and constructed. From 1962 to 1964, this building classfred and constructed. From 1962 to 1964, this building classfred the offices of 40.50's Project Mercury and Manned Spaces housed the offices of 40.50's Project Mercury and Scott laugholy spongaries, internally those of her cury astronauted soft laughous shows a flesh sheet of his building the suite of his sheet laugh soft and part of the sould sign.  Sinch in 1986, as falso an excellent example of the work (A = national sign.) RECOM./CRITERIA frept A + (1), but. long. A (C = locally sign.
REVIEWER LA COElland DISCIPLINE DISCIPLINE
TELEPHONE DATE 10-23-09 & Kamrath,
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N a Houston flow
If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.
and rechnique
J. c. a. o. / . s.



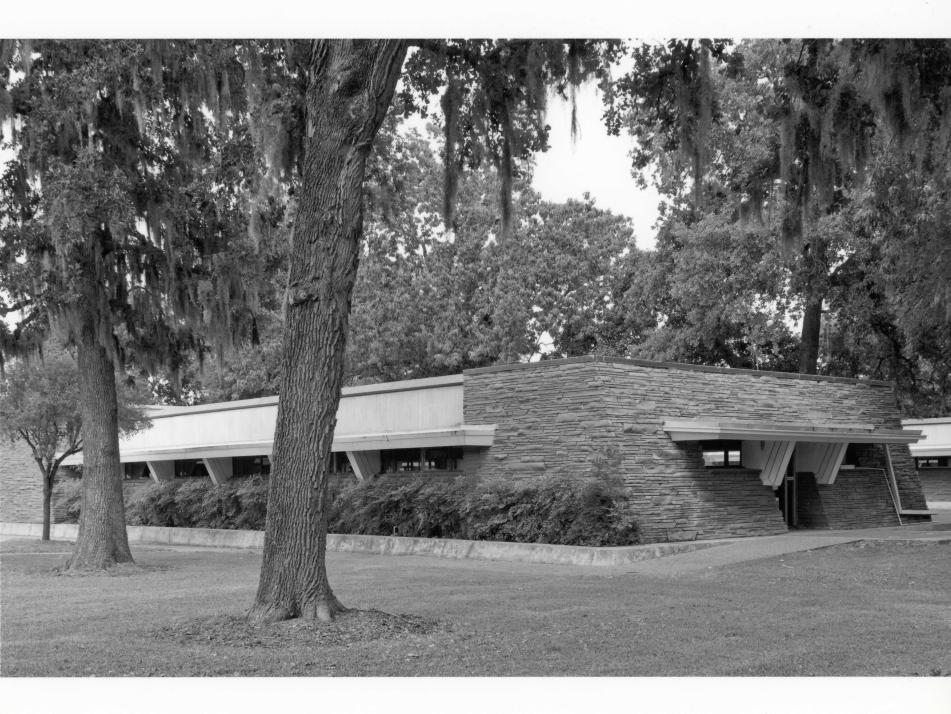
FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 1 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 2 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 3 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 4 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 5 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 6 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 7 OF 9



111111 FARNSWORTH ? CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 8 OF 9



FARNSWORTH & CHAMBERS BUILDING HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS PHOTO 9 OF 9



#### TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories

## MEMORANDUM RECEIVED 2280 SEP 18 2009 TO: Linda McClelland National Register of Historic Places NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE Linda Henderson, Historian FROM: Texas Historical Commission RE: Farnsworth & Chambers Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas DATE: September 15, 2009 The following materials are submitted regarding [address]: Original National Register of Historic Places form X Resubmitted nomination Multiple Property nomination form Photographs X X **USGS** maps Correspondence Other: COMMENTS: SHPO requests substantive review The enclosed owner objections (do\_\_) (do not\_\_) constitute a majority of property owners Other: