

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

**1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Oil &amp; Gas Building

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street &amp; number: 309 W. 7th Street

City or town: Fort Worth

State: Texas

County: Tarrant

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

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

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Mark Wolfe  
Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

12/13/23  
Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

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

### Category of Property

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

### Number of Resources within Property

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

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

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** COMMERCE/TRADE: Business; Department Store

**Current Functions:** COMMERCE/TRADE: Business; VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** MID-CENTURY MODERN NONRESIDENTIAL: Modern

**Principal Exterior Materials:** BRICK, TERRA COTTA

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 6-10)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Commerce (*local level*)

Period of Significance: 1952-1963

Significant Dates: 1952, 1963

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

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

Architect/Builder: Baty, J. Russ (architect); Cummins, Robert J. (engineer); Butcher & Sweeney (contractor)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 11-26)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

### Bibliography (see continuation sheet 25-27)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on November 21, 2017
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

#### Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** Less than 1 acre (0.424 acres)

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 32.751419°N Longitude: -97.331910°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** HIRSCHFIELD ADDITION Block 7 Lot 1R (Account # 42692481) Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas as recorded in the Tarrant Appraisal District. Data accessed March 15, 2023 (Map 6).

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary follows the legal parcel and encompasses the property historically associated with the nominated resource. During construction in 1952 the first floor elevator lobby of the Oil & Gas Building was connected to the adjacent 1930 Fair Building (Star Telegram) and the 1951 Fair Garage. The connection between the buildings was reconfigured in 1964 and again in 1984, and the buildings are currently connected at the first floor elevator lobby and at the second floor. In 1984 a shared entrance was created for the Oil & Gas and Fair buildings on the north elevation. However, there is no historical evidence that these buildings were functionally related.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Susan Allen Kline and Steven C. Kline, for Sandvick Architects Inc.  
Organization: Sandvick Architects Inc.  
Street & number: 1265 West Sixth Street  
City or Town: Cleveland State: OH Zip Code: 44113  
Email: pketter@sandvickarchitects.com  
Telephone: 216-621-8055  
Date: March 3, 2023

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets 28-34)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets 35-54)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets 5, 55-72)

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## Photograph Log

Name of Property: Oil & Gas Building

City or Vicinity: Fort Worth

County: Tarrant

State: Texas

Photographer: Steven C. Kline and Susan Allen Kline

Date Photographed: October 18 and 23, 2022

*All photographs accurately depict property conditions. No changes nor significant deterioration has occurred since the photos were taken in October 2022.*

Photo 1: West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Canyon; Fair and Oil & Gas Buildings, left. View west/southwest.

Photo 2: North elevation. View west/southwest.

Photo 3: North and west elevations. View east.

Photo 4: North and west elevations. View southeast.

Photo 5: Base of north and west elevations. View southeast.

Photo 6: Terra cotta spandrels, north elevation. View south.

Photo 7: West and south elevations. View northeast.

Photo 8: West and south elevations. View northeast.

Photo 9: Penthouse, north elevation with brick spandrel. View south.

Photo 10: Lobby connecting Oil & Gas Building to Fair Building. View east.

Photo 11: Elevator lobby, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View north.

Photo 12: South opening between Oil & Gas and Fair Buildings, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View east.

Photo 13: Entrance to Fair Parking Garage from Oil & Gas Building, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View south.

Photo 14: Non-historic finishes, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View southwest.

Photo 15: Office finishes with original marble sills, 6<sup>th</sup> floor. View southwest.

Photo 16: Original marble wainscot, 16<sup>th</sup> floor. View southwest.

Photo 17: Stairs in penthouse.

Photo 18: Elevator hoists, penthouse. View southeast.

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## Narrative Description

The 16-story Oil & Gas Building at 309 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street was designed in 1952 by architect J. Russ Baty. It is an excellent local example of an early post-World War II Modern skyscraper in downtown Fort Worth, Texas. It has a prominent location at the southeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets. West 7<sup>th</sup> is a major east/west corridor connecting downtown with the Cultural District and the city's west side. The building is organized as a two-part vertical block with a two-story base supporting a 14-story tower. A small two-story penthouse on the roof rises from the south elevation and abuts the west elevation of the adjacent historic 18-story Fair Building.<sup>1</sup> South of the tower is a three-story wing that extends the base. The welded steel-framed building was constructed with concrete floors and roof on top of steel decks. Twelve-inch-thick curtain walls above the base are sheathed with tan-colored face brick. Unadorned brick walls separate columns of vertically aligned double-hung metal windows. The tower's north and west elevations feature brown terra cotta spandrels positioned between each window. The spandrels on the south elevation and penthouse are composed of brown brick. Alterations to the building in 1961, 1964, and 1984 included a recessed entrance at the northwest corner and the removal of original granite and Indiana limestone blocks covering the first two floors. These materials were replaced with white marble panels. In 1984 a large, shared entrance was added on the West 7<sup>th</sup> Street elevation for both the Oil & Gas and the Fair Buildings, as well as large, tinted storefront windows and fixed windows on the second floor of the primary elevations. The interior was designed with flexible floor plans and has been altered over the years to meet tenant needs. The property is currently connected to the adjacent Fair Building (NRHP 2020) at the first elevator lobby and at two openings at the second floor. The buildings were connected at the first floor in 1952, and the connections at the first and second floors were reconfigured in 1964 and 1984. The 1951 Fair Garage is internally connected at the rear and provides parking for both buildings. There is no historic evidence to suggest that the buildings were functionally related. Despite these changes, the Oil & Gas Building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance.

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## Setting

The Oil & Gas Building was constructed in 1952 in the heart of downtown Fort Worth (Maps 1-8). The 16-story building at 309 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street sits at the southeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets.<sup>2</sup> The north elevation faces West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, one of downtown's major east/west corridors. Abutting the building's east elevation is the historic 18-story Fair Building, a three-part commercial block completed in 1930 (NRHP 2020, Figures 1 and 11 and Photo 1). Behind it is the Fair Building's six-level parking garage which extends the width of the block between Throckmorton and Taylor Streets (1950-1951, NRHP 2020 with the Fair Building, Maps 3, 5-8, Figures 7-8, 19, and Photos 7 and 8). West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is one-way east bound and Taylor and Throckmorton Streets are one-way north bound. The nomination of the subject building completes the listing of the half block with the Fair Building and Fair Garage.

West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is an important corridor connecting downtown with the Cultural District and west Fort Worth. Since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this street has been lined with many of downtown's most significant commercial, social, and financial institutions, although some do not have West 7<sup>th</sup> Street addresses. Historically, West 7<sup>th</sup> was referred to as "the Canyon" and "Show Row" due to the prevalence of skyscrapers and movie theaters lining the street (Map 4, Figures 12, 15-17, and 19, and Photo 1). Extant buildings were mostly constructed between 1910 and 1982 and range in height from four- to forty-stories. Many are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They were designed by regionally known architectural firms, most of which were from Fort Worth, and one nationally known

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<sup>1</sup> Fair Building was later known as the Commerce Building and is now called the Star-Telegram Building; however, this description uses the historic name.

<sup>2</sup> The Oil & Gas Building has a legal address of 801 Taylor St. in Tarrant Appraisal District, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.tad.org/property/42692481>.

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firm. Starting at the west end of “the Canyon” and traveling east to Main Street, they include Burnett Plaza, 801 Cherry Street (1982); the First National Bank Building, 500 W. 7th Street (1961); the Neil P. Anderson Building, 411 W. 7th Street (1921, NRHP 1978); the Electric Building, 410 W. 7th Street, (1927-1929, NRHP 1995); the old Fort Worth Star-Telegram Building, 400 W. 7th Street (1920 with later additions); the Oil & Gas Building, 309 W. 7th Street (1952); the Fair Building, 307 W. 7th Street (1930, NRHP 2020); the Fort Worth Club Building, 306 W. 7th Street (1926, 1953-1955); the old First National Bank Building, 711 Houston Street (1910, 1926, NRHP 2009); the Fort Worth National Bank Building, 115 W. 7th Street (1952, NRHP 2022); the Farmers and Mechanics/Fort Worth National Bank Building, 714 Main Street (1921, NRHP 2012); and the former Continental Plaza Building, 777 Main Street, (1982).

Other significant buildings in close proximity to the Oil & Gas Building include the Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building, 817 Taylor Street (1966); W. T. Waggoner Building, 810 Houston Street (1919, NRHP 1979); Fort Worth U.S. Courthouse, 501 W. 10th Street (1933, NRHP 2001); old City Hall/Public Safety and Courts Building, 1000 Throckmorton Street (1938); Fort Worth City Hall, 200 W. Texas Street (1973); and the Petroleum Building, 611 Throckmorton Street (1927, NRHP 2009). Burnett Memorial Park, for many years downtown’s largest park, is located on the south side of West 7th Street between Lamar Street and the Burnett Plaza Building and north of the U.S. Courthouse. West 7th Street shifts from a true east/west orientation to northeast/southwest alignment on the north side of the park near Lamar Street (Map 4, Figures 12, 17, and 19).

## Exterior

The Oil & Gas Building sits at the southeast corner of West 7th and Taylor Streets. Its 16-story tower is positioned in front of a three-story rear wing that is 51' long. Due to the angled alignment of Taylor Street and the footprint of the adjacent parking garage, the building has an irregular pentagonal shape. As a result, the north (front) elevation is not as wide as its south elevation. The building is organized as a two-part vertical block with a two-story base supporting a 14-story tower. It is characterized by alternating vertical bands of tan brick walls and metal double-hung windows linked by brown terra cotta spandrels. This repeating pattern gives the mostly unadorned building visual interest.

### *North Elevation (Map 7, Figures 1-2, 9-11, 15-16, Photos 1-6)*

The north elevation faces West 7th Street. At the east end of the base is a large shared rectangular entrance framed by pink granite blocks and a stepped keystone. Within the frame are two revolving doors separated by a large stainless steel engaged column. The east revolving door accesses the Fair Building and the west revolving door accesses the Oil & Gas Building.<sup>3</sup> The first floor of the two-story base to the west of the entrance features two large full height tinted glass storefront windows. At the building’s west end is a recessed entrance with a stainless steel column at the corner. This entrance is also surrounded by pink granite blocks. On the second floor is a long ribbon of fixed windows with tinted glass. Separating the first and second floor is a band of white marble panels. A limestone cornice wraps around to the west elevation, separating the base from the upper floors. The tower is defined by eleven bays with alternating brick walls and vertically aligned original metal double-hung 1/1 windows with cast aluminum sills. Brown terra cotta spandrels are positioned between each window. Each spandrel is composed of nine terra cotta tiles in three columns; the outer columns of tiles have vertical fluting and the tiles in the center column have a flat profile. This gives the spandrels texture that contrasts with the brick walls. The 16th floor windows have soldier course lintels of tan brick. Between the windows and the parapet are decorative stone squares with a raised square center. These squares have two sizes, either 1'8" square or 3' square, and are laid in an a-a-B-a-a-B-a-a-B-a-a pattern. Stone coping caps the parapet, wrapping around to the west and south elevations.

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<sup>3</sup> Part 1 of Federal Tax Credit Application, Comment Sheet, 2017, page 1.

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*West Elevation (Map 8, Figures 3, 7-9, 19-20, Photos 3-5, 7-8)*

The west elevation follows the angled alignment of Taylor Street. At the north end of the first floor is the recessed entrance framed with pink granite as mentioned in the description of the north elevation. South of the entrance are three ribbons of full-height dark tinted storefront windows that extend to the south wing. At the far end of the wing is a single storefront entrance with tinted glass as well as a flush metal door. The second floor has a long ribbon window of fixed tinted glass. The base's wall surface is covered with white marble panels. Above the base, the tower has nine bays with alternating vertical bands of brick walls and metal double-hung 1/1 windows with brown terra cotta spandrels. It also features aluminum windowsills, brick soldier course lintels above the 16<sup>th</sup> floor windows, and decorative stone squares below the parapet. The squares are laid in an a-B-a-a-B-a-a-B-a pattern. The third floor of the wing has five metal double hung 1/1 windows with brick soldier course lintels.

*South Elevation (Maps 3 and 8, Figures 2, 8, 18-20, Photos 7-8)*

Because of the building's shape, the south elevation of the tower has 13 bays unlike the north elevation's 11 bays. It repeats the alternating vertical bands of tan brick and metal double-hung windows although its spandrels are of brown brick instead of brown terra cotta. The windows contain safety glass and have a 2/2 pattern. The stone squares beneath the parapet are laid in an a-B-a-a-B-a-a-B-a-a pattern. There are also three small rectangular vents placed among the squares. The parapet steps up at the eighth bay. A metal fire escape extends down the second bay from the 16<sup>th</sup> floor to the roof of the three-story wing. A large round metal smokestack extends above the top of the Fair Building and runs down the south wall of the Oil & Gas Building to its base.

*Penthouse (Maps 3, 7-8, Figure 19, Photo 7-9)*

The penthouse is two-stories and sits on the east end of the roof. It abuts the west wall of the adjacent Fair Building and is set back from the north elevation. Its north and south elevations have three metal double hung 2/2 windows with safety glass on each level. They are separated by brown brick spandrels. The west elevation has a flush steel door near the north end and a hooded vent. There are no windows on this elevation.

*Roofs (Maps 3, 7-8)*

The roofs of the Oil & Gas Building's tower, penthouse, and wing have a concrete deck covered with a built-up membrane. Telecommunication and HVAC systems are on the roofs. The wing's roof has a stair tower at its southwest corner.

## **Interior**

The adjacent Fair Building and Fair Garage were connected to the Oil & Gas Building during construction in 1952. At that time, the buildings were only connected at the ground level elevator lobby. The connection between the buildings was reconfigured in 1964 and again in 1984. The buildings are currently connected at the first floor elevator lobby and at two openings at the second floor. One second floor opening provides access from the Fair Building to two rooms in the Oil & Gas Building—however, there is no access to those rooms from the Oil & Gas Building. The second connection is along the north elevation (Map 5, Figures 4, 21).<sup>4</sup> There is no historic evidence to suggest that the buildings were functionally related.

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<sup>4</sup> Part 1 of Federal Tax Credit Application, Comment Sheet, 2017, page 1; Adam Jones, "Fair Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2020, page 11; Susan Kline and Peter Ketter, Sandvick Architects, Inc, to Alyssa Gerszewski, THC, April 27, 2023.

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The main shared entrance on the north elevation provides access to both the Oil & Gas and Fair Buildings (Photo 10). To the right is the elevator lobby for the Oil & Gas Building. On the east wall are four elevators with stainless steel doors and trim (Photo 11). Non-historic wall coverings include pink granite, textured stone, and wood paneling. South of the elevators is another non-historic granite-lined opening to the Fair Building (Photo 12). An entrance to the 1951 Fair Garage is on the south end of the first floor (Map 5, Photo 13). Office and retail spaces on this floor have contemporary finishes as do the office spaces on the upper floors (Figures 5-6, Photo 14). However, some historic materials remain on floors 3 through 16 such as marble “stool” windowsills. Many are painted but others remain unpainted revealing the original brown marble (Photo 15). Original brown marble wainscoting remains behind drinking fountains on some floors (Photo 16). Original concrete and metal stairwells have simple metal balustrades and non-historic non-slip treads (Photo 17). Bathrooms have been updated although some retain original toilet partitions. Floor plans retain their elevator lobbies which are typically altered. Office areas were built with flexible floor plans that have been altered over the years. Ceiling heights have been lowered although pockets were constructed above windows in some areas, retaining the original height. The penthouse functions as the elevator machine room and retains the original elevator hoists (Photo 18). The basement retains original boilers. A metal rollup overhead door and a flush steel pedestrian door provide access from the basement to the parking garage.

### **Alterations**

Alterations to the base of high-rise commercial buildings are common. The Oil & Gas Building’s two-story base was altered in three phases. The first alteration occurred in 1961 when a recessed entrance was added at the northwest corner and full-height storefront windows were added to the west elevation (Figures 3, 9, 13-14, 16). The second alteration occurred in 1964 after the Bank of Commerce moved into the adjacent Fair Building. That building’s base was modified with white marble panels. Large ribbons of fixed windows with tinted glass were inserted on the Fair Building’s second floor. At the same time, white marble panels were added across the eastern three bays of the Oil & Gas Building’s base (Figures 2, 9, 15-16). The third alteration occurred in 1984-1985 when new owners spent \$8 million on renovations to both the Fair and Oil & Gas Buildings and the adjacent parking garage. To unify the Oil & Gas Building’s north elevation with the Fair Building, the remainder of the base and as well as the west elevation’s base were covered with white marble panels. Full-height dark tinted storefront windows were added on the ground floor and long ribbons of fixed windows with dark tinted glass were added at the second story. Pink granite was added at the northwest corner around the recessed entrance as well as at the new shared entrance that was created on the north elevation. An exaggerated pink granite frame with a massive keystone surrounds two revolving glass doors, one for each building. The revolving doors are separated by a stainless steel engaged column. The stainless steel around the column at the northwest corner was also added at this time (Figures 10-11, 15, Photos 1-3).

During the 1984-1985 renovation, the historic opening between the Fair and Oil & Gas Buildings was enlarged to provide easier access between the two buildings. Granite was installed on the lobby floor and new stainless steel elevator doors and trim were added (Map 5). A second connection to the Fair Building was added south of the elevators. There are also two openings from the Fair Building at the second floor of the Oil & Gas Building (Figure 21). All 16 floors have experienced alterations over the past 70 years to meet tenants needs, including alterations to restrooms, elevator lobbies, and corridors (Figure 6).

### **Integrity**

Although it sustained alterations after the period of significance (1952-1963), the Oil & Gas Building retains strong historic and architectural integrity. The seven aspects of integrity as applied to the building are described below.

*Location and Setting:* The Oil & Gas Building remains in its original location in the heart of downtown Fort Worth. The setting remains largely intact with the retention of many nearby contemporaneous multi-story commercial

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buildings. Downtown retains its historic grid pattern with only minor realignments. West 7<sup>th</sup> Street remains a primary east/west corridor in the central business district and retains its “canyon” characteristics.

*Materials, Design, and Workmanship:* It retains integrity of materials on its exterior, including its brick curtain walls and vertically aligned original metal double hung 1/1 windows (2/2 on the south elevation) separated by brown terra cotta spandrels (brown brick on the south elevation). Although the two-story base was altered with the introduction of new materials, the tower retains its original materials. Its integrity of design, revealed through its steel frame, two-part vertical block composition with a two-story base supporting a 14-story tower and its contrasting colors and textures, reflects its local significance as an early post-World War II Modern high-rise with minimal ornamentation. The design’s vertical emphasis remains as does the flat roof. The exterior reflects its primary function as office space. Workmanship is evident through the contrasting exterior materials and interior finishes such as the marble windowsills and wainscot.

*Feeling and Association:* The retention of its design and materials gives the feeling of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century high-rise commercial building. Although largely vacant, the Oil & Gas Building retains integrity of association as it is still a key component of the historic West 7<sup>th</sup> Street canyon.

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## Statement of Significance

The Oil & Gas Building, constructed in 1952, is located in the heart of downtown Fort Worth at 309 W. 7th Street. West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is an important corridor lined with buildings significant to the city's commercial, financial, and social history. Jesse H. Jones, a Houston financier and developer, was responsible for the construction of four extant buildings that helped transform the street into a "canyon" filled with skyscrapers—the Oil & Gas Building among them. The 16-story building was designed by architect J. Russ Baty and engineer Robert J. Cummins as an early post-World War II Modern commercial high-rise characterized by a two-part vertical block composition, and smooth unadorned curtain walls. The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the post-war commercial development of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It was the final building that Jesse H. Jones Interests developed in downtown Fort Worth, and it housed Stanolind Oil and Gas Company and its successor, Pan American Petroleum Corporation, as primary occupant during the period of significance, along with the Bond Clothing Store, and other tenants associated with the petroleum industry. The period of significance is from 1952, the year it was completed, to 1963 when the building was sold to Service Life Insurance Company.

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## Historic Background

Leading Company F of the Second Dragoons, Major Ripley Arnold established a frontier military outpost at the confluence of the Clear and West Forks of the Trinity River in 1849. The site was located at the edge of the Cross Timbers and Great Plains in north Central Texas on land that formerly was the domain of the Wichita, Tawakoni, Comanche, Kickapoo and Jumanos nations. The post was the northernmost and the fifth of eight established in a defensive line in central Texas to protect white settlers along the expanding western frontier. Arnold named it "Fort Worth" in honor of his commander, General William Jenkins Worth, who died of cholera on May 7, 1849 in San Antonio. Fort Worth was never meant to be a permanent post and the army abandoned it in 1853.<sup>5</sup>

Tarrant County, named for state legislator and general Edward H. Tarrant, was organized the same year the fort was established. Birdville, a small settlement northeast of the fort, became the first county seat. Another small community of approximately 100 residents developed around Fort Worth. When the army abandoned the post, the settlement's residents quickly inhabited its empty buildings. The residents initially called the settlement "Fort Town" but eventually adopted the name "Fort Worth." It became the county seat in 1856 following a contentious election. Its county seat status was confirmed by a convincing margin in a second election in 1860. Fort Worth had a population of approximately 350 at the start of the Civil War. The war brought many hardships, but by 1870, the community had a population of approximately 500 people. When Fort Worth was incorporated in 1873, it had a population of approximately 2,500. Its first railroad—the Texas and Pacific—arrived in 1876. By 1900, the city claimed a population of 26,688 and was served by nine rail lines.<sup>6</sup>

The first permanent county courthouse was built on a square above the river on land formerly occupied by the fort. Construction began in 1860 but was halted by the outbreak of the Civil War. The two-story stone building was completed after the war and became a focal point of the central business district. Main Street was aligned with the courthouse which sat at its northern terminus. The courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1876 and its replacement was

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<sup>5</sup> Rick F. Selcer, "Fort Worth," *Handbook of Texas Online*, retrieved May 26, 2021, (<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/fort-worth>). Published by the Texas State Historical Association; *Native Land Digital*, retrieved November 25, 2021 ([https://native-land.ca/?fbclid=iwARI8KLTmo0EHZgtMZUAIgAMmVTHIVDGHmsZMeWPoaO8tTd\\_b0SAVQ1wKdmc](https://native-land.ca/?fbclid=iwARI8KLTmo0EHZgtMZUAIgAMmVTHIVDGHmsZMeWPoaO8tTd_b0SAVQ1wKdmc)).

<sup>6</sup> Carol Roark, *Fort Worth's Legendary Landmarks*, (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1995), 18; Janet Schmelzer, "Fort Worth, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, retrieved October 22, 2021, (<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/fort-worth-tx>). Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

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soon overcrowded. In 1893, construction began on a new courthouse of red granite described as “a striking example of American Beaux Arts eclecticism, a classical style drawing inspiration from the buildings of the French and Italian Renaissance.” This building still serves its original function.<sup>7</sup>

As downtown prospered, more substantial structures of brick and stone replaced wood-framed commercial buildings. Many were located on Weatherford Street, an east/west street bordering the south end of the courthouse square. By 1885, Main Street and Houston Street (located one block west of Main) were lined with mostly one- and two-story brick buildings south to around 6<sup>th</sup> Street (1<sup>st</sup> Street was the first east/west street south of Weatherford). Brick and stone buildings appeared at the south ends of Main and Houston as these blocks bordered the Texas and Pacific Railway. Most commercial buildings between West 6<sup>th</sup> and West 15<sup>th</sup> Street were one- and two-story frame structures.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Growth of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

City leaders created the Board of Trade in 1882 to encourage the commercial growth of the city. In 1889, the organization constructed a permanent building at the northwest corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Houston Streets. The five-story mansard-roofed brick and stone building featured a corner tower overlooking West 7<sup>th</sup> and the growing downtown.<sup>9</sup> Other impressive buildings soon appeared along 7<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1894, the five-story Worth Hotel, often considered the city’s first luxury hotel, was constructed at the southeast corner of Main and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. John R. Hoxie constructed a five-story building at the northwest corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Main in 1899 to house his bank, the Farmers and Mechanics National Bank.<sup>10</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought continued growth to Fort Worth. Between 1900 and 1910, its population grew from 26,688 residents to 73,312. During this decade, its reputation as “Cowtown” was secured following the announcement in 1902 that the Chicago-based Armour and Swift packing companies would build extensive slaughterhouse complexes in North Fort Worth. For many years, the packing houses were the city’s largest employers. The related businesses spawned by their presence helped spur the city’s growth. Other factors contributed to Fort Worth’s expansion through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1917, Camp Bowie, a World War I military training camp, was established on the plains west of the city where a residential development from the 1890s named Arlington Heights had failed to prosper. More than 100,000 soldiers were trained at the camp until it closed in 1919. The camp’s infrastructure helped bring development to the area and in 1922, Arlington Heights and seven other suburban communities were annexed into the city. The city’s extensive rail connections and grain elevator complexes made Fort Worth the second largest grain center in the United States by the mid-1920s. The discovery of oil in West Texas in the 1910s brought numerous petroleum-related industries and businesses to Fort Worth. Camp Bowie and the area’s related airfields also engendered the growth of the aviation industry. This was further augmented by the construction of the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation factory west of town. It produced B-24 Liberator bombers as the United States prepared for entry into World War II. The plant helped Fort Worth reach a population of 177,662 in 1940 as thousands of people came to the city in search of well-paying jobs. The factory remained in Fort Worth after the war as did the adjacent Tarrant Field Airdrome, later known as Carswell Airforce Base and now known as Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth. By 1950, Fort Worth had a population of 278,778 people. In 1960, 356,268 people called Fort Worth home. By 1970, the population had grown to 393,476, making Fort Worth the state’s fourth largest city behind Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, respectively.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Roark, *Fort Worth’s Legendary Landmarks*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, Fort Worth, Texas, 1885. Original maps located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, retrieved November 16, 2022 ([https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/d-f/txu-sanborn-fort\\_worth](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/d-f/txu-sanborn-fort_worth)).

<sup>9</sup> Quentin McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2003), 15; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, Fort Worth, Texas, 1889, Sheet 7.

<sup>10</sup> McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards*, 12, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Schmelzer, “Fort Worth, TX”; “Population,” *City of Fort Worth*, retrieved November 16, 2022

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These factors influenced the development of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Main and Lamar Streets as it became lined with many of downtown's most significant commercial, social, and financial institutions, although some did not have West 7<sup>th</sup> Street addresses. In 1908, First Methodist Church moved into a new sanctuary at the southeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets. The congregation stayed at this location until 1931 when it moved to a new church in the 800 block of West 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Sanguinet and Staats, a prominent Texas architecture firm with headquarters in Fort Worth, designed a 10-story home for First National Bank (NRHP 2009) at the northeast corner of Houston and West 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. It was completed in 1910. Sixteen years later, the firm designed an addition on its north side that replicated the original design and doubled its size. The bank stayed at this location until 1961 when it moved to a 21-story Miesian building four blocks west at 500 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1921, the Farmers and Mechanics National Bank (NRHP 2012) moved into a 24-story building on the site of its former home at the northwest corner of Main and West 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, making it the tallest building in Fort Worth for 36 years. It was also designed by Sanguinet and Staats. In 1921, Amon G. Carter, the publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and the city's biggest booster, moved his newspaper into a four-story building at the northwest corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor. This limestone, brick, and terra cotta building was also designed by Sanguinet and Staats. That same year, another Sanguinet and Staats-designed structure, the elegant 11-story Neil P. Anderson Building (NRHP 1978), was constructed on the southeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Lamar Streets. It faced Burnett Memorial Park to the west and featured a curving façade of yellow brick and creamy terra cotta. The Fort Worth Club, a prestigious social club for the city's white elites, moved from 6<sup>th</sup> and Main to a new building at the northwest corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Throckmorton Streets in 1926. The 13-story granite and brick building stretched across the block between West 6<sup>th</sup> and West 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. Although it faced Throckmorton Street, it had a West 7<sup>th</sup> Street address. The Fakes Furniture Company occupied the first five floors and the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad leased a large portion of floors seven through ten. The upper floors were devoted to the club and included suites that were leased by such luminaries as oilman Sid Richardson and Amon G. Carter. A group of businessmen who met at the club for morning coffee or afternoon drinks became known as the Seventh Street Gang for its ability to broker power and mentor—or some would say control—candidates for city council. All these buildings are extant except for the 1908 First Methodist Church. In addition, Burnett Memorial Park, located on the south side of West 7<sup>th</sup> between Lamar and Burnett Streets, was developed between 1919 and 1936 based on the landscape design of George E. Kessler and implemented by Hare & Hare, landscape architects of Kansas City, Missouri. The Kessler-Hare & Hare design for Burnett Park is not extant (see Map 4 for the location of the park and historic buildings along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street).<sup>12</sup>

### Jesse H. Jones and West 7<sup>th</sup> Street

Jesse H. (Holman) Jones (1874-1956) rose from managing lumberyards in Hillsboro, Dallas, and Houston to developing real estate, commercial buildings, and banking interests in the Houston area. By the early 1900s, he was the Houston area's largest real estate developer and was responsible for the construction of most of the city's major pre-World War I buildings. In 1908, he purchased part of the *Houston Chronicle*. He was an original stockholder in the Humble Oil and Refining Company, one of his few ventures into the oil industry, and played an important role in the development of the Houston Ship Channel. President Woodrow Wilson selected Jones to be the director of general military relief for the American Red Cross during World War I. President Herbert Hoover appointed him to the board of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a recently established government entity designed to address the economic uncertainties of the Great Depression. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt tapped him for the chairmanship of the agency, a position he held until 1939. During this time, Jones and the RFC "[prevented] the

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(<https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/about/population>).

<sup>12</sup> McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards*, 35, 38, 74; Carol Roark, *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Central Business District* (Fort Worth, Texas: Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, Texas, 1991), 38, 39-40, 42, 74-76; Mary Rogers, "Time swept away the Gang's influence," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 28, 1991, 3, retrieved November 18, 2022 ([www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)); Susan Allen Kline and the Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, *Fort Worth Parks* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2010), 52. Burnett Street between West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and West 10<sup>th</sup> was later vacated.

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nationwide failure of farms, banks, railroads, and many other businesses” and “became the leading financial institution in America and the primary investor in the economy.” In 1939, President Roosevelt appointed Jones to head the Federal Loan Agency. While holding this position, he also served as Secretary of Commerce from 1940 until 1945 when he left Washington, D.C. because of political maneuvers and a falling out with President Roosevelt.<sup>13</sup> Although Jones’ holdings included a bank, hotels, and the *Houston Chronicle*, most of his investments were in buildings he constructed in Houston, New York City, Fort Worth, Memphis, and Dallas. Of this strategy he said “‘I built to the reasonable limit of my resources, and looked to the income and increased values for profits. I had faith in the future, and it has been justified.’” Between 1908 and 1956, he constructed one substantial building every year and only sold one during his lifetime.<sup>14</sup>

By the mid-1920s, Jones had constructed approximately 30 commercial buildings in Houston. By the time of his death in 1956, he had built 33 and owned 35. His buildings included a headquarters for his newspaper, hotels, theaters, department stores, banks, retail stores, a laundry, public garages, radio stations, warehouses, a bus station, and utilities. He never named a building after himself, but instead chose a name based on a building’s major tenant as he did in Fort Worth, or occasionally a historical figure. And he was not averse to renaming a building. In a few instances, he bought property in anticipation of a city’s growth.<sup>15</sup>

Through his financial expertise, Jones left an indelible mark on the development of Fort Worth’s West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, constructing four substantial buildings (six if counting annexes to two of the buildings) between 1926 and 1930, and two between 1950 and 1952. His involvement in downtown’s development began in late 1925 as he began acquiring valuable property. As a result of his association with building contractor and architect-engineer Wyatt C. Hedrick, his first building project was the Tarrant County Medical Society’s 18-story Medical Arts Building. Hedrick’s firm, the successor of Sanguinet and Staats, designed the structure described as “one of the city’s most elegant” buildings. It was located immediately west of Burnett Memorial Park on a small block bordered by West 7<sup>th</sup> Street on its north end. It was demolished in 1981 for construction of the 40-story Burnett Plaza Building.<sup>16</sup>

As the Medical Arts Building was nearing completion, Jones was constructing the new Worth Hotel just west of the Fort Worth Club at the northeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets (Map 4). The 18-story building opened in September 1927 featuring 300 rooms. It quickly became one of the city’s most popular hotels. Opening shortly after the hotel and immediately north of it was the Worth Theatre, initially called the Texas Theater. As a shrewd businessman, Jones recognized the growing popularity and economic potential of motion pictures. His Worth Theatre was the city’s first true movie palace. Wyatt C. Hedrick was the designer of the hotel and theater annex. However, Houston architect Alfred C. Finn is credited with the theater’s lavish Egyptian Revival style interior, bringing a touch of Hollywood glamour to Fort Worth. Finn had previously worked for Sanguinet and Staats in the Fort Worth office and later worked with Jones on the design of numerous buildings. The Worth Hotel and Theatre were imploded in 1972 for the construction of an annex and parking garage for the Fort Worth Club.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lionel V. Patenaude, “Jones, Jesse Holman,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, retrieved November 21, 2022 (<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/jones-jesse-holman>). Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>14</sup> Bascom N. Timmons, *Jesse H. Jones: The Man and the Statesman* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975 [reprint of book published in 1956 by Henry Holt and Company, New York]), 84, 154; “Jesse Holman Jones—Builder and Public Servant,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 3, 1956, 30, retrieved December 5, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>).

<sup>15</sup> Timmons, *Jesse H. Jones: The Man and the Statesman*, 82-83; “Jesse Holman Jones—Builder and Public Servant.”

<sup>16</sup> “Greatest Building Year in History of the City is Forecast of Leaders,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram and Sunday Record*, January 3, 1926, 29, retrieved January 23, 2023 (<https://www.newspapers.com>); “Jesse H. Jones Given Credit for Huge Building,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram and Sunday Record*, April 24, 1927, 15, retrieved October 4, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards*, 68.

<sup>17</sup> McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards*, 76; Judith Singer Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth, Texas* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1988), 39-42.

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On December 11, 1927, the front page of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram and Sunday Record* featured an architectural rendering of Jones' next project, the 18-story Electric Building (NRHP 1995). It was also designed by Hedrick's firm and was constructed at the northeast corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Lamar Streets. Its name was derived from its primary tenant, the Fort Worth Power and Light Company. As the building was nearing completion in 1929, work began on a six-story office and theater annex that was also designed by Hedrick's firm. As with the Worth Theatre, its 1,250-seat auditorium was designed by Alfred C. Finn. It opened in April 1930 as the Hollywood Theatre. The auditorium was not as elaborate as the Worth Theatre but was notable for its eclectic Art Deco and Georgian Revival ornamentation.<sup>18</sup> The Worth and the Hollywood, in combination with the Palace Theatre located a half-block east of Main Street on East 7<sup>th</sup>, contributed to 7<sup>th</sup> Street earning the moniker "Show Row."<sup>19</sup>

Jones' fourth project, the 18-story Fair Building (NRHP 2020), was completed in 1930. It was among the last buildings constructed in downtown Fort Worth until after World War II. Hedrick's firm also designed this structure which took its name from its major tenant, the Fair Department Store. The store occupied the first six floors. Other tenants included the Fort Worth Grain and Cotton Exchange, oil companies, physicians, and insurance companies.<sup>20</sup> Jones' four pre-World War II buildings—Medical Arts, the Worth Hotel and Theatre, the Electric Building and Hollywood Theatre, and the Fair Building—helped transform West 7<sup>th</sup> to a "canyon" of skyscrapers. The Electric Building, along with the Neil P. Anderson Building across the street, served as the western gateway to downtown Fort Worth (Figure 12). Business leaders were grateful for the energy Jones' projects brought to downtown. Only two of his projects were completed when the city's Exchange Club "adopted" him as a citizen and entered his name in "The Book of Golden Deeds" for his numerous contributions to Fort Worth. He was feted with a banquet on March 31, 1928, becoming the first non-resident to receive the award since its inauguration in 1925.<sup>21</sup>

### Construction and Tenants of the Oil & Gas Building

In the post-World War II-era, Fort Worth's business community sought ways to meet pressing needs in the central business district. Lawrence S. Waterbury, an engineer with the consulting firm Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Hogan & McDonald of New York, conducted a study of downtown parking conditions that was released in 1947. The study noted that 85,000 vehicles were entering downtown between 6:30 A.M. and 6:30 P.M. It concluded that 2,000 additional parking spaces were needed to meet demands. It was recommended that nine multi-story parking garages be constructed by private funds.<sup>22</sup> As part of the private sector, the Fort Worth National Bank addressed the issue of convenient parking for its customers by constructing a seven-level reinforced concrete parking garage at the northeast corner of East 7<sup>th</sup> and Commerce Streets in 1950.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kate Singleton, Electric Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Listed 1995, NRIS #95000048; "Architect's View of the New 18-Story Electric Building," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram and Sunday Record*, December 11, 1927, 1, retrieved November 21, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); "Opening Over, Hollywood is on Regular Schedule," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 19, 1930, 19, retrieved November 21, 2022, (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); Cohen, *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth*, 43-46.

<sup>19</sup> In the mid-1990s, portions of the Hollywood Theatre's interior were converted to a parking garage although some ornamentation remains. The Palace Theatre was originally constructed in 1910 as an opera house and was converted to a movie theater by 1929. It was demolished for an office tower c. 1980. See McGown, *Fort Worth in Vintage Postcards*, 9, 38, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Roark, *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey: Fort Worth Central Business District*, 39.

<sup>21</sup> "Club Here to Honor Jones," *Fort Worth Record-Telegram*, March 27, 1928, 1-2, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), retrieved October 16, 2022. The previous recipients were Amon G. Carter (1925), Major K. M. Van Zandt (1926), and the entire City Council (1927).

<sup>22</sup> "Solving Fort Worth's Parking Problem," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 18, 1947, 6.

<sup>23</sup> "Fort Worth National Buys Site for Parking Pavilion," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 25, 1950, 8, retrieved August 31, 2021 (<https://www.newspapers.com>); "Progress is Made on Plan for Downtown Parking," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1950, Section 2, 12; "New Parking Garage Will Be Opened Today," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 15, 1950, 23.

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That same year, the construction of three new skyscrapers on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and one parking garage was announced. Two of the skyscrapers were for banks; one was for a 15-story office building for the Fort Worth National Bank (1952, NRHP 2022) at 115 W. 7<sup>th</sup> between Main and Houston Streets and the other was the 30-story Continental National Bank (1952-1956, demolished 2006).<sup>24</sup> The Jones Interests' announcement that it would construct a six-level parking garage and an office building at 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets made the front page of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on May 24, 1950. The office building was to be constructed immediately west of Jones' Fair Building on the former site of the First Methodist Church and across the street from Jones' Worth Hotel and Theatre. The parking garage stretched the width of the block behind the Fair Building and the proposed office building with access to Taylor and Throckmorton Streets. Departing from Jones' collaborations with Wyatt C. Hedrick, the garage and new office building were designed by Houstonians J. Russ Baty, architect, and Robert J. Cummins, engineer. Both had close ties with the Jones Interests in Houston. The general contractor was Butcher & Sweeney from Fort Worth. Construction of the 500-car Fair Garage began in early June 1950 and was completed in April 1951.<sup>25</sup>

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* speculated on the height of the proposed office building. It was noted that the foundation was designed to support a 16-story building. Extant architectural plans indicate that the initial design was for 12 stories (Figures 2-3). However, the 16-story height was confirmed on July 1, 1951, when the newspaper published Baty's rendering of the structure while announcing that it would be named the "Oil & Gas Building."<sup>26</sup> The rendering pictured a building with a vertical emphasis, two-part vertical block composition with a base supporting a tower, and alternating columns of brick wall and 1/1 double-hung windows separated from the floor above by spandrels (Figure 1). The newspaper stated that the base and the entrance at the east end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street elevation would be of pink granite. The wall above the base to the bottom of the third story windows was to be covered with large blocks of Indiana limestone. To the right of the main entrance were large storefront windows. The second floor had 1/1 windows that aligned with the windows on the upper floors (Figures 9-10). The Taylor Street elevation had the same characteristics with the exception that the southern 51 feet of the building was only three stories. The fully air conditioned interior featured a 12.5-foot by 45-foot lobby with marble walls and four elevators. This lobby was connected to the lobby of the Fair Building through a small passageway near the W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building. An enclosed passageway connected the building with the parking garage to the rear (Figure 4).<sup>27</sup>

Like many of Jesse H. Jones buildings, the Oil & Gas Building's name was derived from its major tenant, the Stanolind Oil and Gas Company. In early 1952, 187 accounting and treasury department employees transferred to Fort Worth from Tulsa, Oklahoma as the company decentralized. In addition, all the company's North Texas-New Mexico division offices, previously located in Jones's Fair and Electric Buildings, were consolidated in the new building. This brought the number of Stanolind employees in the Oil & Gas Building to approximately 450.<sup>28</sup> Floor plans and other sources indicated that the company occupied the 4<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> floors. As was typical in the early 1950s the layouts were flexible with both open office areas and offices with plaster metal partition walls. The ceilings were also plaster. The spaces were simply designed with little ornamentation. Each floor also had an elevator lobby (Figure 5).

The Jesse H. Jones Interests ran an advertisement in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in January 1952 welcoming visitors to the annual Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show. The ad featured a rendering of the building and stated that

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<sup>24</sup> Susan Allen Kline and Steven C. Kline, Fort Worth National Bank Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Listed 2022. NRIS #100008197.

<sup>25</sup> "Office Building to be Erected," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 24, 1950, 1, retrieved March 15, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); "New Storage Garage Opens," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 24, 1951, 8, retrieved March 15, 2022, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>26</sup> "Office Structure at 7th and Taylor Named," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 1, 1951, 9, retrieved March 7, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>). The newspaper article stated that the spandrels would be "greenish tinted."

<sup>27</sup> "Office Structure at 7th and Taylor Named."

<sup>28</sup> "Office Structure at 7th and Taylor Named"; "'Operations Stanolind' Brings 415 New Citizens to Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Magazine: Publication of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce* 27 (March 1952): 24-25, 31.

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it was “a prime example of another Jesse H. Jones project, designed to meet the expanding needs of Fort Worth business and industry.”<sup>29</sup> However, there was no dedication ceremony or open house to mark its completion. The Oil & Gas Building was one of four major buildings completed in downtown during 1952. The other three were the 15-story Fort Worth National Bank (Preston M. Geren, Architect and Engineer, NRHP 2022), the 4-story Continental National Bank (Preston M. Geren, Architect and Engineer, enlarged to 30 stories in 1956, demolished 2007), and the 11-story Fortune Arms Apartment Hotel (Charles E. Armstrong, architect, NRHP 2016). The first three were on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and the Fortune Arms was located four blocks north.<sup>30</sup>

On May 1, 1952, the Bond Clothing Store opened in the Oil & Gas Building’s large retail space on the first floor and carried the address of 311 W. 7th Street (Figures 9-10). This store was the 87<sup>th</sup> in the national chain. The first Bond store in Fort Worth opened on Main Street in 1938 but was destroyed by fire in 1945. Company officials waited for an appropriate space before reopening a store in the city and they believed the West 7<sup>th</sup> Street location provided it. The store’s interior was described as ultra-modern with diffused lighting and other features for the comfort and convenience of shoppers. It was designed by J. Russ Baty and constructed by Butcher & Sweeney, the same architect and general contractor who designed and built the Oil & Gas Building. Access to the store was through entrances on West 7<sup>th</sup>, Taylor Street, the building’s lobby, and from the Fair Garage.<sup>31</sup>

In late July 1952, Clay J. Berry, the manager of the Jesse H. Jones Interests in Fort Worth, announced that the second and third floors of the Oil & Gas Building would be finished out for Southwestern Bell Telephone Company’s accounting department by October 1. It also had an employment office on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. All other office spaces were completed and occupied except for three.<sup>32</sup> June 1953 marked the leasing of the last retail space in the building. The tenant was the Clarkson Engraving Company, formerly known as Stafford Engraving. The 3,500 square-foot space on the first floor—finished out by Butcher & Sweeney—allowed the company to enlarge its gift, fountain pen, and stationery departments with a special section reserved for wedding invitations.<sup>33</sup> The 1953 City Directory indicated that another first floor tenant was the lobby’s Oil & Gas Building Cigar Stand. As mentioned, Stanolind Oil and Gas Company occupied the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup> floor with additional offices on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Other 12<sup>th</sup> floor tenants included attorneys, American General Insurance, and a well surveying company. The tenants on the 13<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> floors included attorneys associated with the petroleum industry; oil production, exploration, and drilling companies; oil field supply companies; and investment and accounting firms. One 13<sup>th</sup> floor office was listed as vacant. By 1957, similar tenants were in the building with one office vacancy on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.<sup>34</sup>

As was typical in office buildings, tenants in the Oil & Gas Building came and went. In 1961, Western Savings & Loan Association opened on the west end of the first floor in the space formerly occupied by Clarkson’s Engraving. Modifications included opening the space “through extensive use of glass and aluminum,” increasing the height of the ceiling for the creation of a mezzanine for a board room and a coffee bar for customers, and a cantilevered stairway. Images in advertisements for the financial institution indicated that the work also included the creation of a recessed entrance at the northwest corner of the building and the replacement of the original storefront windows on granite

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<sup>29</sup> “Welcome Visitors to the Rodeo and Stock Show,” advertisement for The Jesse H. Jones Interests, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 20, 1952, 75, retrieved March 7, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

<sup>30</sup> “Building for Year Pushes Near City’s 1950 Mark,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 28, 1952, 8, [www.newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com), retrieved March 7, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> “Bond Store Takes Lease in New Oil, Gas Building,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 20, 1952, 3, retrieved March 7, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>); “Bond to Open New Store with Officials Attending,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 30, 1952, retrieved March 7, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

<sup>32</sup> “All Oil and Gas Building Space Has Been Leased,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 27, 1952, 64, retrieved March 7, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

<sup>33</sup> “Engravers Plan Move to New Building,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 7, 1953, 76, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com>, retrieved September 20, 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Polk 1953 Fort Worth City Directory, 923, and Polk 1957 Fort Worth City Directory, 12, both available at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

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bases with full-height storefront windows (Figures 13 and 14). Kneer and Hamm, a local architecture firm, designed the renovations and Cain and Cain was the general contractor.<sup>35</sup>

In 1963, the adjacent Fair Department Store closed its downtown location in its namesake building, opening six floors and the basement for new tenants. Later that year, the Jesse H. Jones Foundation of Houston sold the Fair Building, the Oil & Gas Building, and the Fair Garage to the Service Life Insurance Company for \$6 million. This transaction was the largest single real estate deal in downtown Fort Worth to date and was seen as a significant boost to downtown revitalization efforts. The Bank of Commerce would occupy the basement and first floor of the Fair Building and the Service Life Insurance Company would occupy at least two others. At the time, the Pan American Petroleum Corporation, formerly known as Stanolind, was the major tenant of the Oil & Gas Building and had 400 employees at that location.<sup>36</sup>

### The Oil & Gas Building after 1963

In February 1964, the Texas Commissioner of Insurance designated the Fair Building, the Fair Garage, and the Oil & Gas Building as one building named "The Service Life Center." Later that year, the Service Life Company undertook a major renovation of the Fair Building and its garage as part of the conversion of the lower levels for the Bank of Commerce and for other upgrades to the building. Renovations also were done on the Oil & Gas Company Building, the most noticeable being the continuation of the new white marble panels on the Fair Building's base to a portion of its base (Figures 15 and 16).<sup>37</sup>

By 1967, the Executive Health Spa was operating on the second floor of the Oil & Gas Building. In 1971, the Amoco Production Company, formerly known as Stanolind and then Pan American Petroleum Corporation, closed its Fort Worth division as employees were transferred to West Texas, Tulsa, Houston, Denver, and New Orleans. The Bond Clothing Store closed in 1973 after operating 21 years in the Oil & Gas Building.<sup>38</sup>

The Service Life Center had a change of ownership in 1981 and received a new name in 1984. The new owners, California-based Seaborg Inc. and Bass Brothers Enterprises, christened the two buildings "Fort Worth Center." In 1984-1985, the buildings and adjacent parking garage underwent an \$8 million renovation designed by WZMH Group Inc. of Dallas. An important component was giving the buildings a symmetrical appearance along their West 7th Street elevations. This involved adding white marble panels on the rest of the Oil & Gas Building's base on the north and west elevations. Large ribbons of fixed windows with dark tinted glass were added to the second floor of both elevations. Pink granite was used over the entrance at the northwest corner of the building as well as around the new shared entrance between the former Fair Building and the Oil & Gas Building. Other alterations included enlarging the interior connection between the two buildings, stainless steel encapsulation of the northwest corner's column, stainless steel doors and trim around the elevators, and "revamped" main corridors and restrooms. The name "Fort Worth

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<sup>35</sup> "Savings Firm to Open New Offices on Birthday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1961, section 2, 13, retrieved November 3, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

<sup>36</sup> "Ft. Worth Buildings Sold for \$6,000,000," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1963, 5, retrieved November 2, 2022. ([www.infoweb.newsbank.com](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com)).

<sup>37</sup> Tony Slaughter, "Wheels Start Spinning for Gridiron Dinner," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1964, 10, retrieved November 11, 2022, <https://www.newspapers.com>; "Bank of Commerce Primps For a \$1 Million New Look," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 28, 1964, 18, retrieved November 11, 2022 ([www.infoweb.newsbank.com](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com)).

<sup>38</sup> "Reduce or Gain." Advertisement for Executive Health Spa and Universal Health Spa, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 11, 1967, 11, retrieved September 30, 2022 ([www.infoweb.newsbank.com](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com)); Harry Heinecke, "Amoco Employees [sic] Guests at Party," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 6, 1971, 37, retrieved November 29, 2022 ([www.infoweb.newsbank.com](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com)); "Bonds Going Out of Business Sale." Advertisement for Bond Store, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 15, 1973, 18, retrieved November 2, 2022 ([www.infoweb.newsbank.com](http://www.infoweb.newsbank.com)).

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Center” was short-lived as the names “Commerce” and “Oil & Gas” were restored to the respective buildings in 1989. Since 1987, the buildings have had numerous owners.<sup>39</sup>

### Significance under Criterion A: Commerce

The Oil & Gas Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. It was the final building that the Jesse H. Jones Interests developed in downtown Fort Worth. Its primary occupant was the Stanolind Oil and Gas Company and its successors. Many of the other tenants also were associated with the petroleum industry. The period of significance is from 1952, the year the building was completed, to 1963 when the Jones Interests sold it. By 1964, the building was under new ownership and underwent renovations at the base.

Jesse H. Jones’ Fort Worth holdings were concentrated on downtown’s West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Buildings he constructed prior to World War II included the 18-story Medical Arts Building (1927, demolished 1981), the 18-story Worth Hotel and Worth Theatre (1927, demolished 1972), the 18-story Electric Building and Hollywood Theatre (1927-1929, extant although the annex no longer contains a theater), and the 18-story Fair Building (1930, extant). These buildings helped to transform West 7<sup>th</sup> Street into “the Canyon” as it became lined with skyscrapers. Jones’ post-war projects included the six-level Fair Garage (1951, extant) and the Oil & Gas Building (1952, extant). Of the four extant buildings, three are listed in the National Register (Map 4).

After Jones’ death in 1956, the Jesse H. Jones Interests and its allied companies operated in Fort Worth into the 1960s. Its holdings were among the city’s highest taxpaying businesses. In 1957, the combined Jones companies ranked sixth among the top taxpayers in the city based on property valuations. The name and assessed value of the buildings owned by Jones’ Phoenix Corporation were the Fair Building (\$1,617,680), the Oil & Gas Building (\$1,566,350), and The Fair Garage (\$532,520). The Houston Endowment owned the Medical Arts Building (\$787,080), the Electric Building (\$818,690), and the Hollywood Theatre (\$248,050). The Worth Hotel (\$687,230 plus \$75,000 in personal property at the hotel) and the Worth Theatre (\$224,280) were owned by Worth Properties, Inc. The Commerce Company owned parking lots at 10<sup>th</sup> and Lamar (\$18,750) and 10<sup>th</sup> and Taylor (\$31,000) in addition to property at 7<sup>th</sup> and Florence (\$23,400). These values totaled \$6,632,530, the equivalence of \$69,597,659.68 in 2022.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the period of significance, the Oil & Gas Building functioned as an office building with retail businesses and later a financial institution on the first floor, contributing to the commercial development of downtown Fort Worth. When it opened in 1952, it provided needed space for the Stanolind Oil and Gas Company as it consolidated formerly scattered departments into one location. Stanolind and its successor, Pan American Petroleum Corporation, were its primary tenant during the period of significance.

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<sup>39</sup> Marti Benedetti, “Facelift Scheduled for twin buildings,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 1, 1984, 26, retrieved October 6, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); Marti Benedetti, “Clinic’s new location under construction,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 20, 1984, 84, retrieved October 6, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); “Our new name has already become a classic,” leasing advertisement for the Oil & Gas and Commerce Buildings, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 30, 1989, 71, retrieved October 6, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); Sandra Baker, “2 downtown buildings sold,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 13, 2007, C3, retrieved September 27, 2022 (<https://infoweb.newsbank.com>); Property Data, Account 05227194, Address 307 W 7th St, *Tarrant Appraisal District*, retrieved November 28, 2022 (<https://www.tad.org/property.php?pin=05227194>).

<sup>40</sup> “Jones Firms Rate Sixth in City Taxes,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 24, 1958, 15, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com>, retrieved September 20, 2022; CPI Inflation Calculator, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, retrieved January 19, 2023 ([https://bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)).

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## Design of the Oil & Gas Building

Designed by architect J. Russ Baty and engineer Robert J. Cummins, the Oil & Gas Building is an excellent local example of a post-World War II Modern commercial high-rise building as demonstrated through an emphasis on its structure and volume and smooth unadorned curtain walls. While nearly devoid of ornamentation, the complementing colors of the tan brick and the brown terra cotta spandrels create visual interest and give the building a vertical emphasis. Its steel-framed structure and interior features such as fluorescent lighting and air conditioning allowed the building to be designed with flexible floor plans which became popular in the postwar era. Its external form clearly identifies the Oil & Gas Building's primary function as an office building, another principle of Modernism.

Technological advances such as air conditioning and fluorescent lighting influenced the design of post-World War II skyscrapers. As architectural historian Carol Willis noted in her book *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines of New York and Chicago* (1995), "Fluorescent lighting and air conditioning were as important to the transformation of post-World War II skyscrapers as were the elevator and steel-cage construction to the first tall office buildings of the late nineteenth century." Because fluorescent lighting was stronger than incandescent lights, fewer windows were needed to provide supplemental light, ceiling heights could be lower, and office space could be deeper than the 24- to 27-foot depth that was nearly standard prior to World War II. Less dependence on windows for light also eliminated the need for light courts or irregular forms in large buildings which translated to more leasable floor space for building owners. Air conditioning also decreased the need for windows for cooling and air circulation. Fewer and smaller windows meant floor plans could be more flexible, giving rise to open work areas. A simplified structure resulted in one that could be built quicker, an important consideration for a building owner whether it was the principal occupant or if the building was constructed as a speculative venture as was the case with the Oil & Gas Building.<sup>41</sup>

Beginning in the late 1920s and continuing into the post-World War II era, many designers of high-rise buildings began to move away from traditional, highly ornamented exteriors, adopting Modern preferences for simplified wall surfaces. However, simplified could still mean dynamic in appearance. A building that influenced the exterior design of Depression-era and post-World War II skyscrapers across the country was the Daily News Building in New York City (1930, NRHP 1982, NHL 1989). Designed by Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells, the 36-story building presented a bold "soaring" tower on its primary façade above the lower nine floors. Unlike other contemporaneous skyscrapers in the city, there were no other setbacks on this elevation, reinforcing the building's powerful presence. The exterior was composed of narrow vertical bands of white glazed brick alternating with windows separated by black and beige brick spandrels. As Carol Willis noted, "These stark stripes represented one of the simplest and also the most radical exterior treatments of the decade." Art Deco bas-relief at the entrance provided ornamentation for an otherwise uncluttered exterior. (Interestingly, at virtually the same time, Hood, with Godley & Fouihoux, designed the McGraw-Hill Building [NHL 1989], considered by some to be New York City's first International Style building with its horizontal banding of windows and blue-green terra cotta).<sup>42</sup>

The verticality of the Daily News Building and other buildings such as Rockefeller Center (1932-1940, NHL 1987), also in New York City, was quickly adopted in Texas.<sup>43</sup> Prominent Houston architect Alfred C. Finn, FAIA (1883-1964) incorporated vertical banding for tower-like forms, or slabs, for several of his Texas designs (notably, Cummins and Baty worked with Finn prior to their design for the Oil & Gas Building). A pre-World War II example was the 15-

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<sup>41</sup> Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines of New York and Chicago* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 100, 132-133.

<sup>42</sup> Willis, *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines of New York and Chicago*, 102-103; Anthony W. Robins, Daily New Building, New York, New York County, New York. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, listed 1982. NRIS #82002291; S. Allen Chambers, *National Landmarks, America's Treasures* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 322-323; Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City*. Fourth Edition. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 254.

<sup>43</sup> The following discussion of Texas examples of high-rise commercial buildings with vertically emphasized designs was developed with input from architectural historian Stephen Fox. Stephen Fox, email to W. Mark Gunderson, AIA, June 2, 2022. Copy in authors' possession.

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story People's National Bank Building in Tyler, constructed in 1932 with a rear six-story addition added on top of a four-story wing in 1936 (NRHP 2002, also listed in Tyler Downtown Historic District, NRHP 2022). The building has a symmetrical primary façade but unlike Hood's design, the tower has stepped massing. Polished black granite covers the building's base. Its verticality is emphasized using buff brick walls alternating with vertical rows of windows linked by spandrels (original casement windows have been replaced with smoked glass which also now covers original metal spandrels). Architect John B. Roberts designed an L-shaped, eight-story building for Lubbock National Bank that was completed in 1940. It had a red granite base, light cream-colored brick curtain walls and cast stone spandrels. A local newspaper called it "a strongly accentuated vertical design" and added that "The windows and spandrels are a decided influence on the design." The building has also been significantly altered.<sup>44</sup>

Finn's design for the 24-story City National Bank Building in Houston (1947, NRHP 2000) caught the attention of the architectural community before it was completed. In October 1947, it was included in *Architectural Record's* "Building Types Study Number 130: Office Buildings." Designed in association with engineer Robert J. Cummins, the building's flexible floor plan, aided by column spacing, air conditioning and fluorescent lighting, allowed for the economical construction of a building on a plot that would have proved difficult to develop a decade or so previously. Like the Daily News Building, its primary ornamentation was reduced to a granite base and contrasting colors in vertical strips above it. Tan brick was used for its curtain walls and red and maroon brick for the spandrels between windows. Its cornice was adorned with terra cotta chevrons at its upper parapets—an Art Moderne holdover from its initial 1939 design.<sup>45</sup>

Baty's and Cummins design for the 16-story Oil & Gas Building bore similarities to Finn's City National Bank, notably its two-part vertical block form and a sheer tower with alternating bands of brick walls and vertically aligned windows separated by spandrels of a contrasting color. The Fort Worth example was also built with a flexible floor plan aided by column spacing and the use of fluorescent lights and air conditioning. However, the Oil & Gas Building lacks the massive presence and bulk, the Art Moderne ornamentation, and setbacks of the City National Bank Building. The Fort Worth example represents the evolving Modernist preference for unadorned and simplified designs.

The Fort Worth National Bank Building at 115 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street was completed the same year as the Oil & Gas Building. The 16-story building, designed by Fort Worth architect Preston M. Geren, shares similarities with the Daily News Building and Finn's City National Bank Building. Like these buildings, its slab has a powerful presence as it stretches 200 feet between Main and Houston Streets. It also has a vertical emphasis based on alternating strips of brick curtain walls and windows linked by spandrels of a complementing color. In addition to its size, a notable difference between the Fort Worth National Bank Building and the Oil & Gas Building is the separate massing of the base for banking functions and the T-shaped massing of its slab and tower. The Fort Worth National Bank Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2022.<sup>46</sup>

Constructed four years after the Oil & Gas Building, Finn's design for Longview's First National Bank Building was another example of a Texas high-rise office building using alternating vertical banding as its principal exterior

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<sup>44</sup> Diane Elizabeth Williams, People's National Bank Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, listed in 2002. NRIS #2002000896; "Lubbock National Building is Answering Need for More Office Space in City: Latest Design, Equipment Used," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche* (Lubbock, Texas), October 12, 1940, 20, retrieved June 24, 2022 ([www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)). The Lubbock National Bank Building has been altered with the removal or covering of its red granite base. Its windows have been replaced with tinted glass which also covers the spandrels. A skybridge connections the building to the Lubbock County Courthouse located across the street to the south.

<sup>45</sup> "Architectural Record's Building Types Study Number 130: Office Buildings," *Architectural Record* 102 (Number 4, October 1947): 119-146; "City National Bank Building," *Architectural Record* 102 (Number 4, October 1947): 138-139; Lila Knight, City National Bank Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, listed 2000. NRIS #00000291.

<sup>46</sup> Susan Allen Kline and Steven C. Kline, Fort Worth National Bank Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, listed 2022. NRIS #100008197.

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ornamentation. Upon its completion, the nine-story two-part vertical block was the city's tallest building. The exterior was described as "a combination of Texas pink brick, variegated gray brick and reddish brown brick spandrels" on a base of Indiana granite and a sub-base of Texas pink granite. The verticality of this mid-rise building has been diminished by the application of monochromatic paint on the exterior.<sup>47</sup>

*J. Russ Baty (1897-1973), Architect*

J. Russ Baty was born in Palestine, Texas. He attended Rice Institute and graduated in 1919 (his future collaborator, Robert J. Cummins, was an instructor at Rice at this time). He then was employed by Houston architect Alfred C. Finn whose firm designed numerous buildings for Houston developer Jesse H. Jones. He assisted Finn with the design of the Lamar Hotel, the upper 13 floors of the Commerce Building, Houston's Oil and Gas Building, and the San Jacinto Hotel, among other Houston projects.<sup>48</sup> Working directly for Jones, Baty designed several Houston parking garages and other buildings. Among them was Houston's c. 1950 Southwestern Bell Capitol Main Office. Baty collaborated with engineer Robert J. Cummins on the design of Jones' Oil & Gas Building in Fort Worth which was completed in 1952. In 1955, he and Cummins designed the Houston Club Building, Jones' "last skyscraper."<sup>49</sup>

Jones died in 1956 but Baty continued to work on projects for the Jesse H. Jones Interests and The Houston Endowment, a philanthropic organization Jones and his wife, Mary Gibbs, created in 1937. Among them were renovations to the interior of the Worth Hotel in Fort Worth in 1957. The work, carried out by Butcher & Sweeney, consisted of moving the hotel office from the third to the fourth floor to accommodate the construction of two additional meeting rooms on the third floor.<sup>50</sup> He also designed the five-story annex and motor lobby for the Rice Hotel in Houston. It was completed in 1958. The hotel was under Jesse H. Jones' ownership when the original portion of the building was constructed in 1912-1913 and was owned by The Houston Endowment when Baty's addition was constructed. The annex shared similarities to Fort Worth's Oil & Gas Building with its simplified design, vertical emphasis, and spandrels above and below windows. The addition was later demolished and a parking garage constructed on the site when the Rice Hotel was converted to loft apartments.<sup>51</sup>

*Robert J. Cummins (1881-1960), Engineer*

Robert James Cummins was born in Mountmellick, Ireland in 1881. After attending schools in County Antrim and Dublin, he received a Bachelor of Engineering degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1899 and 1900 from Queens College of the Royal University of Ireland, Galway. He then came to the United States and worked as a civil engineer for the City of Detroit, Michigan, and with the Grasset Concrete Steel Company. He formed the consulting firm Adams and Cummins in 1910 and moved to Houston. There, he specialized in the development of port facilities over the next 50 years. He served on the Houston Port Commission for 25 years and was its vice chairman for 15 of those years. He designed the harbors and port facilities in Brownsville and Corpus Christi as well as port facilities in Freeport, Port Arthur, Beaumont, and Orange. He also designed numerous wharves along the Houston Ship Channel.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Longview's Tallest Building is Designed to Meet Future Needs of a Progressive City," *The Longview News-Journal* (Longview, Texas), May 18, 1956, Bank Section, 1, retrieved June 8, 2022 ([www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)). The addition of large windows on the top floor has also affected the building's integrity.

<sup>48</sup> Southwestern Bell Capitol Main Office, 1114 Texas Avenue, City of Houston, Planning and Development Department, Archeological & Historical Commission Landmark Designation Report, 2017, retrieved September 21, 2022 ([https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/landmarks/16L319\\_1114\\_Texas\\_Ave\\_SW\\_Bell\\_Bldggs.pdf](https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/landmarks/16L319_1114_Texas_Ave_SW_Bell_Bldggs.pdf)).

<sup>49</sup> Southwestern Bell Capitol Main Office. The Houston Club Building was imploded in 2014.

<sup>50</sup> "Worth Hotel Remodeling Plan for 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor is Announced," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 19, 1957, 23, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com>, retrieved October 11, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Ellen Beasley and Ken Wellborn, Rice Hotel, Houston, Travis County, Texas, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, listed 1978; Anna Mod, email to authors, October 25, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Uel Stephens, "Cummins, Robert James (1881-1960)," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/cummins-robert->

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From 1918 to 1921, he taught a senior engineering class at Rice Institute. During the Great Depression, he was an engineering advisor to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation under the helm of Jesse H. Jones. He also was an adviser for the construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and construction programs of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Cummins was awarded the U.S. Navy's Certificate of Achievement in 1945 for his role in the design of the United States Naval Hospital in Houston.<sup>53</sup> He was the engineer on several projects associated with architect Alfred C. Finn and developer Jesse H. Jones, including the San Jacinto Monument and Museum (1936-1939). He also collaborated with Finn on Houston's City National Bank (1946-1947).<sup>54</sup>

Cummins was considered a pioneer in the use of welded steel frame design and construction and is credited for its wide use along the Gulf Coast. This is the method used in the design and construction of the Oil & Gas Building in Fort Worth. He was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and was president of the Houston section in 1940. His civic contributions included serving as a technical advisor for the International Boundary Commission, board director of the Travelers Aid Society, a director of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Rotary Club. He died in Houston in 1960 and was survived by his wife, Sascha, one son, and two daughters.<sup>55</sup>

*Butcher & Sweeney, General Contractors*

The Oil & Gas Building was constructed by the well-known local general contracting firm Butcher & Sweeney. It was established in the early 1900s by C. (Charles) M. Butcher (1875-1940) and Robert C. Sweeney (1884-1957). Butcher was born in Red Oak, Texas and was a graduate of Texas A&M College. He moved to Fort Worth in 1904 and retired from active participation in the firm for health reasons six months before his death on November 27, 1940. Sweeney was born in Newborn, Tennessee and moved to Fort Worth in 1907. Butcher & Sweeney was in operation for more than 50 years and was responsible for the construction of many Fort Worth buildings. They included Central Methodist Church, (1909), Traders Oil Mill Office Building (1918), Crystal Ice Company Ice Vault (1920), Tandy Elementary School (1922), Memorial Arch, Texas Christian University (1923), Harris Methodist Hospital (1924-1930), Monnig Dry Goods Company-Wholesale (1925), North Side Junior High School (1927), Charles E. Nash Elementary School (1927), Shaw Brothers Milk, Ice Cream, and Ice Plant (1928), J. C. Penney Building (attributed, 1929), Amon G. Carter Stadium (west side, 1930), Jennings Avenue Underpass (1930-1931), Arlington Heights Senior High School (1936-1937), and the M-K-T Railroad Freight Station addition (1953).<sup>56</sup> Although most of the firm's work was commercial, industrial, or transportation-related, it completed a few residential projects including the c. 1915-1916 renovation of the W. R. Edrington House from a Victorian-era two-story dwelling to a brick-veneered Prairie School-inspired design. It also constructed the Prairie style Fountain and Mary Oxsheer House in 1916 (NRHP 2017) and the Scott-Bailey House (1918).<sup>57</sup>

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james, retrieved September 27, 2022. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>53</sup> Stephens, "Cummins, Robert J."

<sup>54</sup> Dorothy Estis Knepper, "San Jacinto Monument and Museum," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/san-jacintomonument-and-museum>, retrieved October 5, 2022. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>55</sup> "Robert James Cummins, Professional Engineer, 1881-1960" MOAM.INFO, retrieved October 6, 2022 ([moam.info/queue/robert-james-cummins-of-houston-seaot\\_59d6f83f1723dda151906cBe.html](https://moam.info/queue/robert-james-cummins-of-houston-seaot_59d6f83f1723dda151906cBe.html)); Stephens, "Cummins, Robert J."

<sup>56</sup> "Attack Fatal to Contractor," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1940, 17, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com>, retrieved October 5, 2022; "C. M. Butcher Funeral Plans Are Awaited Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1940, 27, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), retrieved October 5, 2022; and "Robert C. Sweeney, Contractor, Dies in Hospital After Short Illness," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 11, 1957, 5, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), retrieved October 5, 2022. Information on the firm's projects was gathered from numerous sources including the Tarrant County Historic Resources Surveys (Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, 1986 1991) and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. The Crystal Ice Company Ice Vault was built during the brief period when the company was known as Butcher, Sweeney & Friedman. Harry B. Friedman left the partnership and formed a very successful construction firm under his name.

<sup>57</sup> This house was acquired by The Woman's Club of Fort Worth in 1924. It was extensively altered in 1936, following the design of the architecture firm Patterson and Teague. The work included removing the Prairie School features and squaring off the front plane of the house. See Susan Allen Kline, *The Woman's Club of Fort Worth*, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, listed April 10, 2017. NRIS #100000862.

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After Butcher's death in 1940, Sweeney continued with the firm until his retirement. He died in 1957. Projects constructed after Sweeney's death included the Civil Courts Building (1957-1958), Casa Manana (1958), Criminal Courts and Jail Building (1962), the old First National Bank (Baker Building) renovation (1967), and the Alfred J. Loos Stadium, Dallas (1965). The company later operated under the name Lydick & Associates and remained in business until 1996.<sup>58</sup>

Butcher & Sweeney completed several projects for the Jesse H. Jones Interests in Fort Worth. They include the Fair Garage (1951), the Oil & Gas Building (1952), and renovation of the Worth Hotel (1957). It also worked on the 1964 remodel of the Fair Building and likely that of the Oil & Gas Building after they were sold by the Jones Interests.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

The Oil & Gas Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the post-war commercial development of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It was the final building that Jesse H. Jones Interests developed in downtown Fort Worth, and it housed Stanolind Oil and Gas Company and its successor as primary occupant during the period of significance, along with the Bond Clothing Store, and other tenants associated with the petroleum industry. The period of significance is 1952-1963.

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<sup>58</sup> Tony Slaughter, "Full-page N. Y. Times Ad Gets Quick Results," *C*, January 15, 1965, 4, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), retrieved November 11, 2022; "J. W. Lydick, Fort Worth civic leader," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 13, 1997, 10, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com>, access November 11, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> "Bank of Commerce Will Show Off New Offices at Open House Today," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 1, 1965. 20, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), retrieved November 11, 2022.

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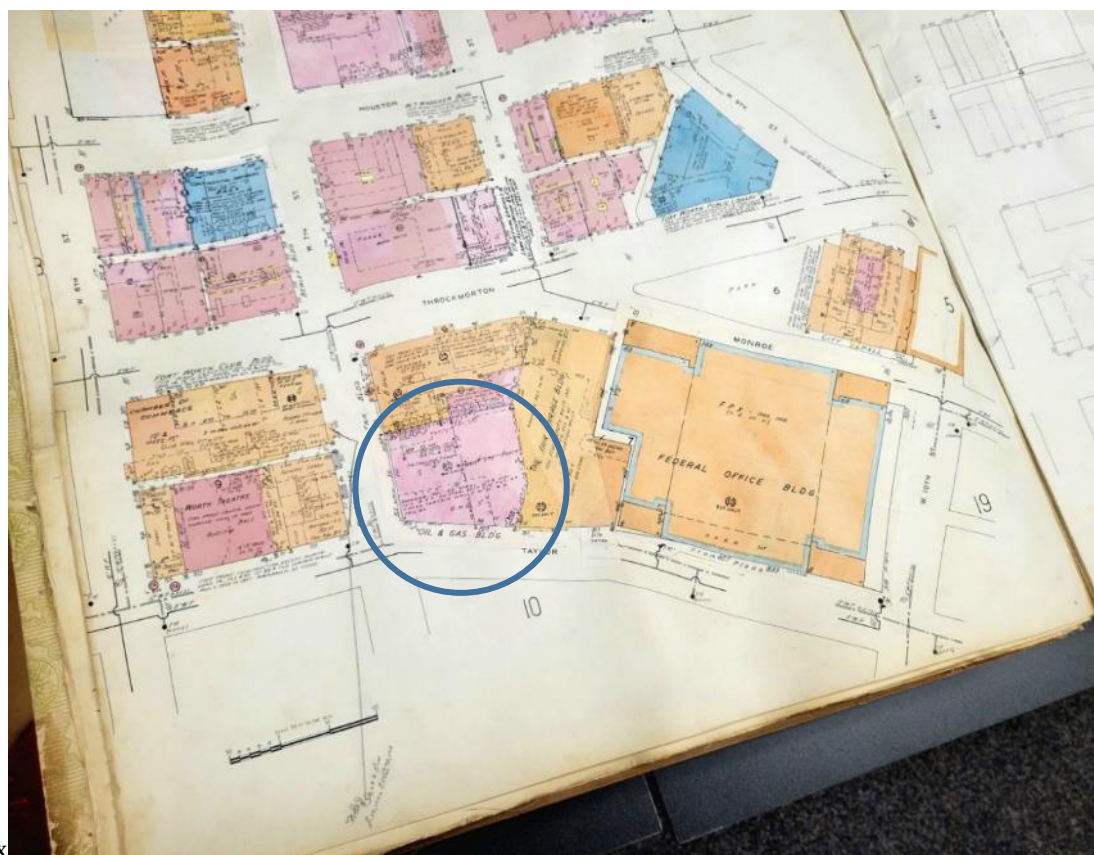
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**Maps**

Map 1: Tarrant County



Map 2: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Co., Fort Worth, Texas, Volume 1, 1951, updated c. 1965. Courtesy Tarrant County Archives. ^N



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Map 3: Google Earth Map, accessed January 18, 2024.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Map 4: Historic buildings along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Not to scale. Oil & Gas Building #11.

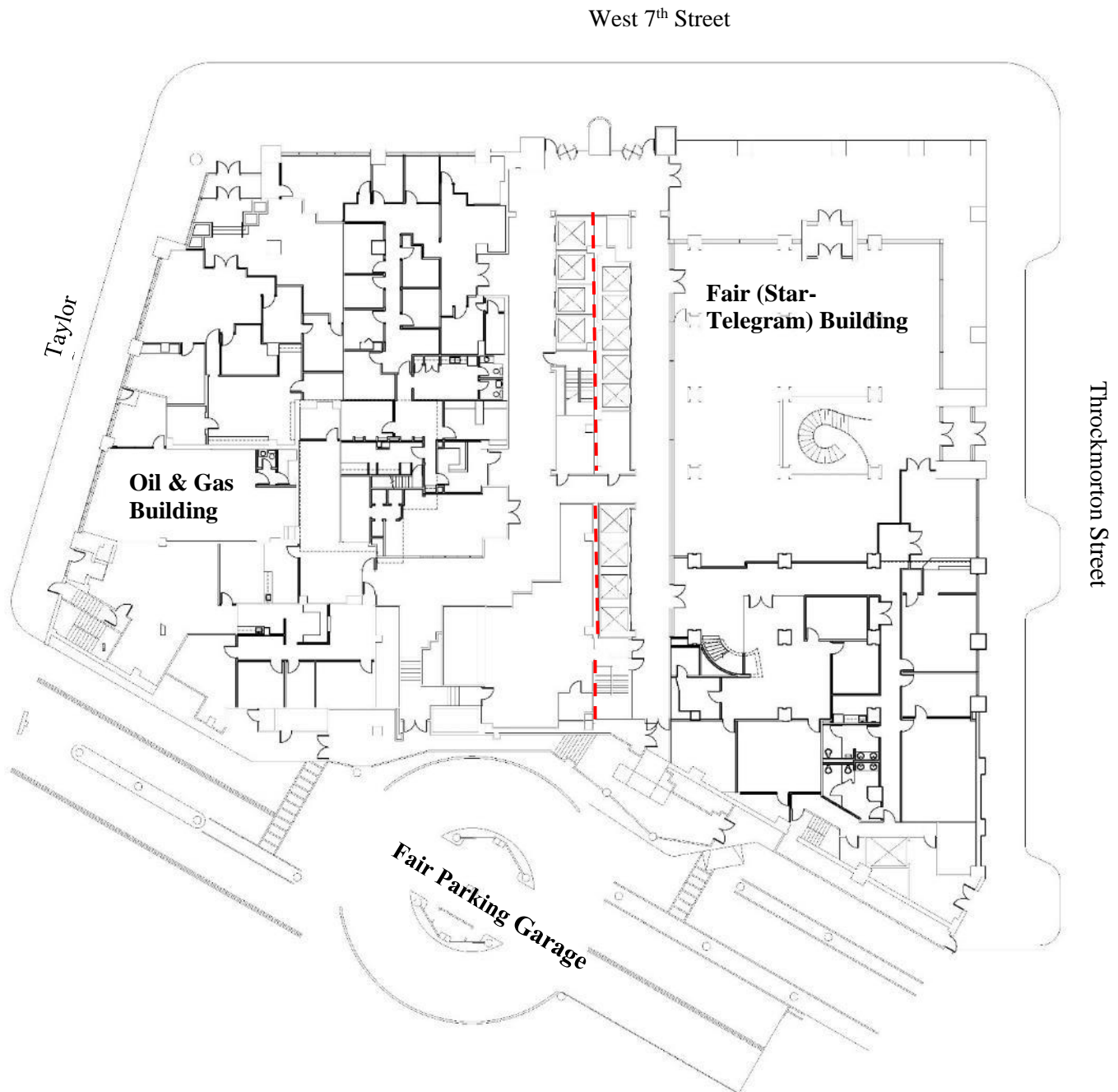


1. First National Bank Building, 1961
2. Electric Building, 1927-1929, NRHP 1995
3. Fort Worth Star-Telegram Building, 1920, 1940-1970
4. Fort Worth Club, 1926, 1953-1955
5. First National Bank Building, 1910, 1926, NRHP 2009
6. Farmers & Mechanics National Bank, 1921, NRHP 2012
7. Hotel Texas, 1920-1921, 1961, 1979-81, NRHP 1979
8. Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952, NRHP 2022
9. W. T. Waggoner Building, 1919-1920, 1984-1985, NRHP 1979
10. & 10A Fair Building\* (1930) and Fair Garage (1951), NRHP 2020 (jointly)
11. Oil & Gas Building, 1952
12. Neil P. Anderson Building, 1921, NRHP 1978

\*Fair Building is now known as the Star-Telegram Building

Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Map 5: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Plan showing openings to the Fair (Star-Telegram) Building at elevator lobby.



Wall between Oil & Gas and Fair (Star-Telegram) Buildings

Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Map 6: Google Earth map showing nominated boundary in red. HIRSCHFIELD ADDITION Block 7 Lot 1R (Account # 42692481) Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas as recorded in the Tarrant Appraisal District. Data accessed March 15, 2023. The boundary follows the legal parcel and encompasses the property historically associated with the nominated resource.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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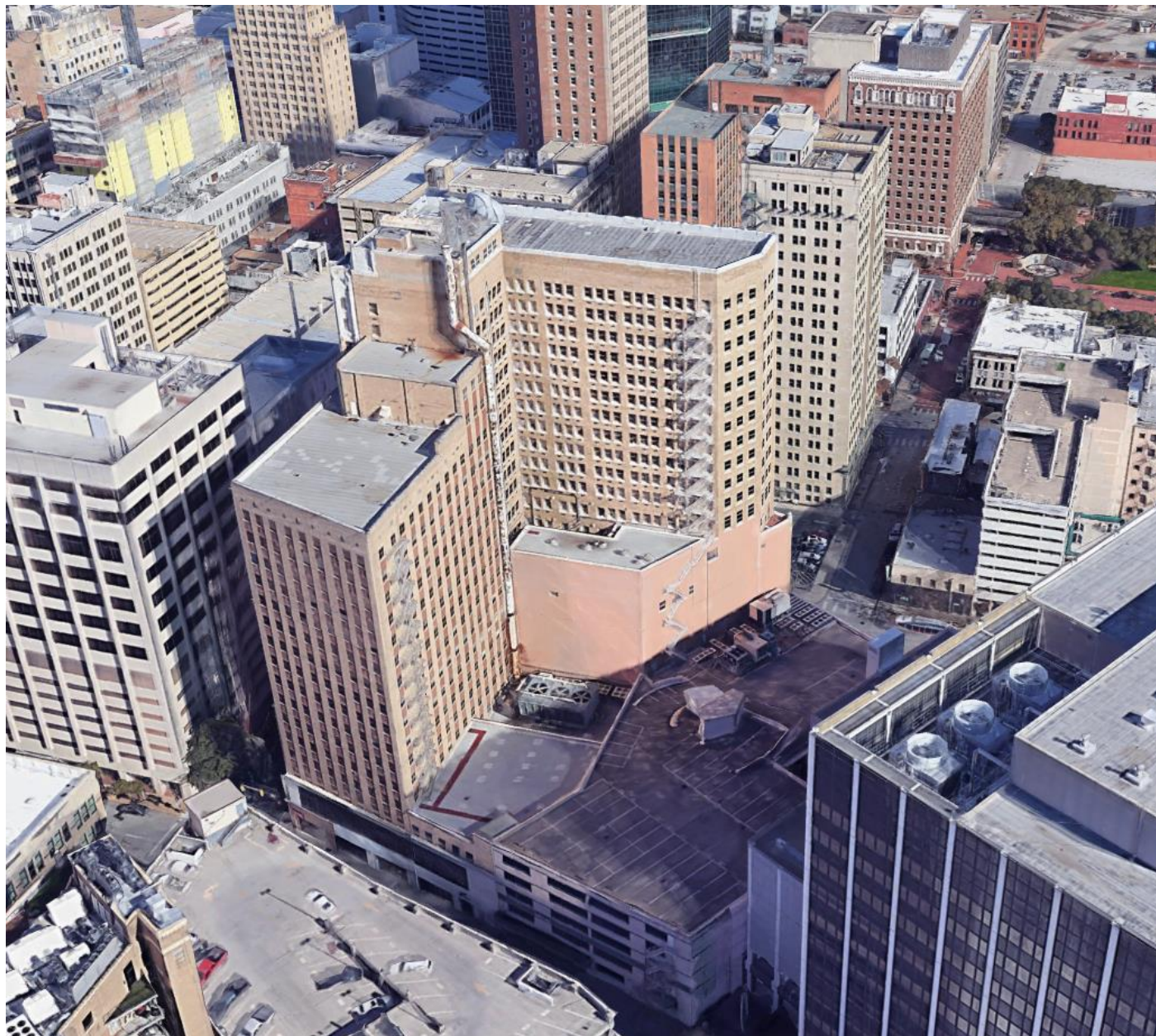
Map 7: Google Earth Map showing north (primary) and west elevations, looking southeast, accessed March 15, 2023.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Map 8: Google Earth Map showing east and south (rear) elevations, looking east, accessed March 15, 2023.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

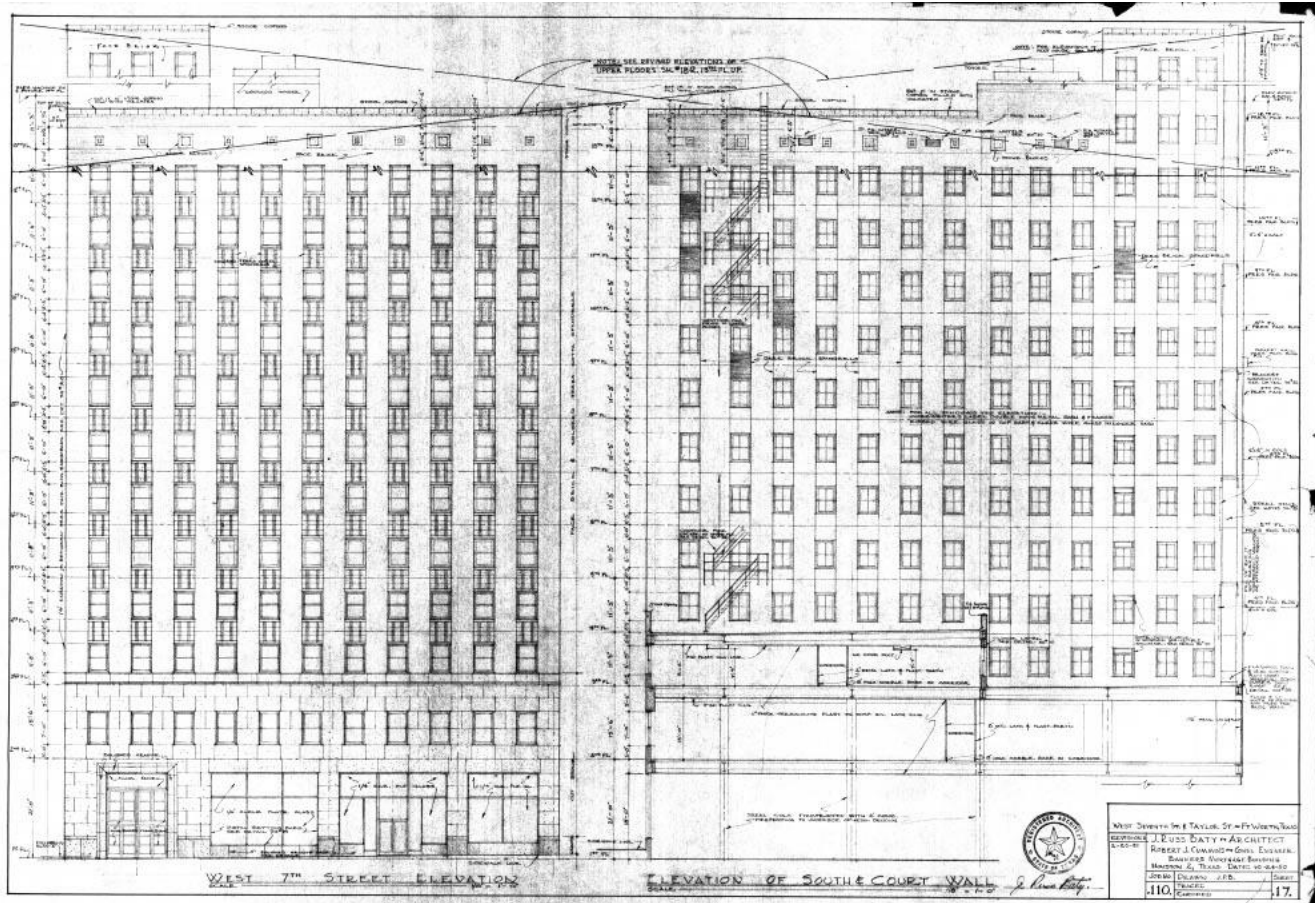
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Figure 1: Oil & Gas Building, rendering by J. Russ Baty, 1951 (approximately). View looking SE. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-51-1-18, Digital ID #20096756. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

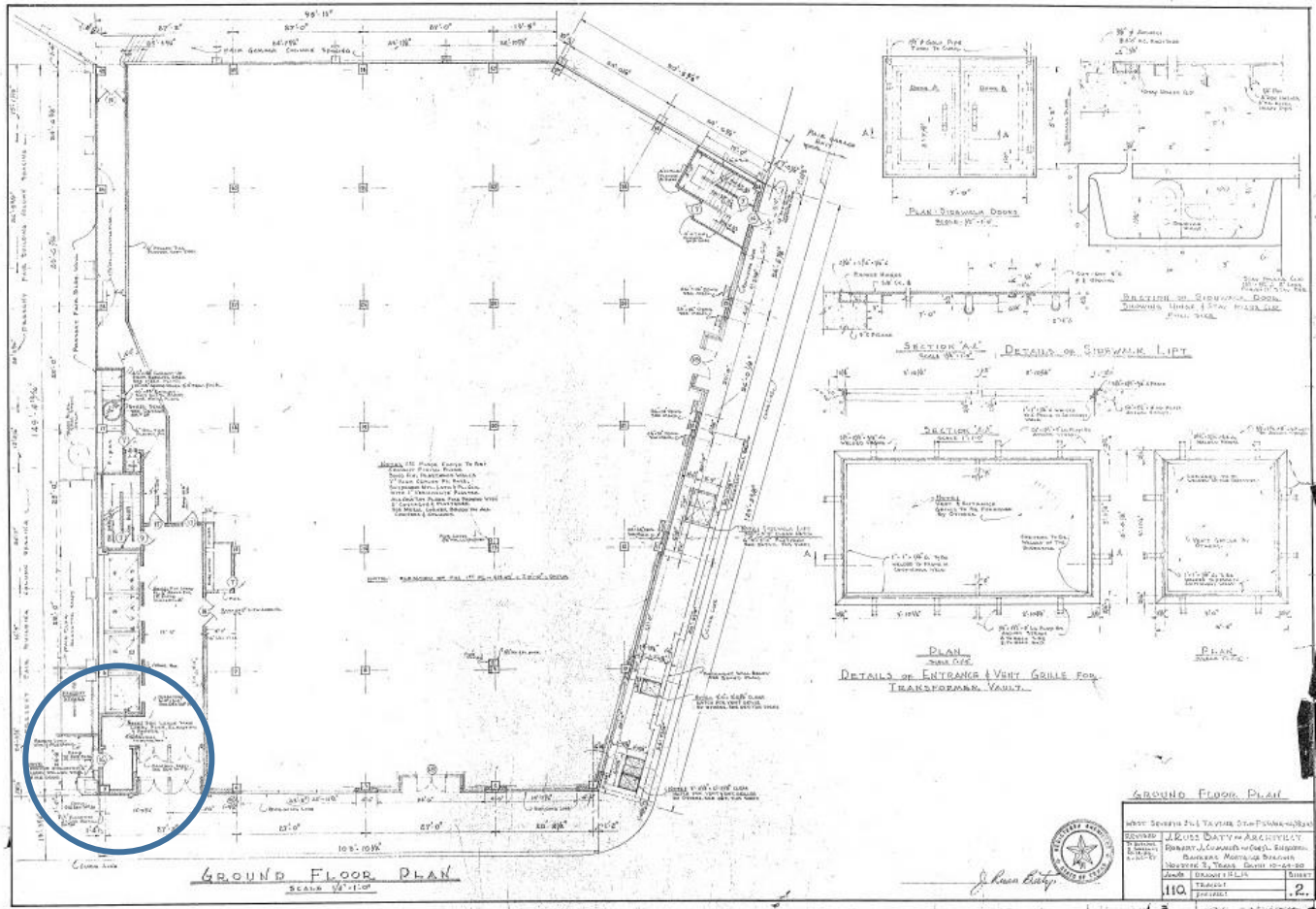
Figure 2: North (West 7<sup>th</sup> Street) and south elevations, Oil & Gas Building as originally conceived with 12 stories.





Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Figure 4: Oil & Gas Building, original ground floor plan with connection to Fair Building but no tenant spaces.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Figure 5: Oil & Gas Building, original typical upper floor plan, this one specifically for Stanolind Oil and Gas Company.

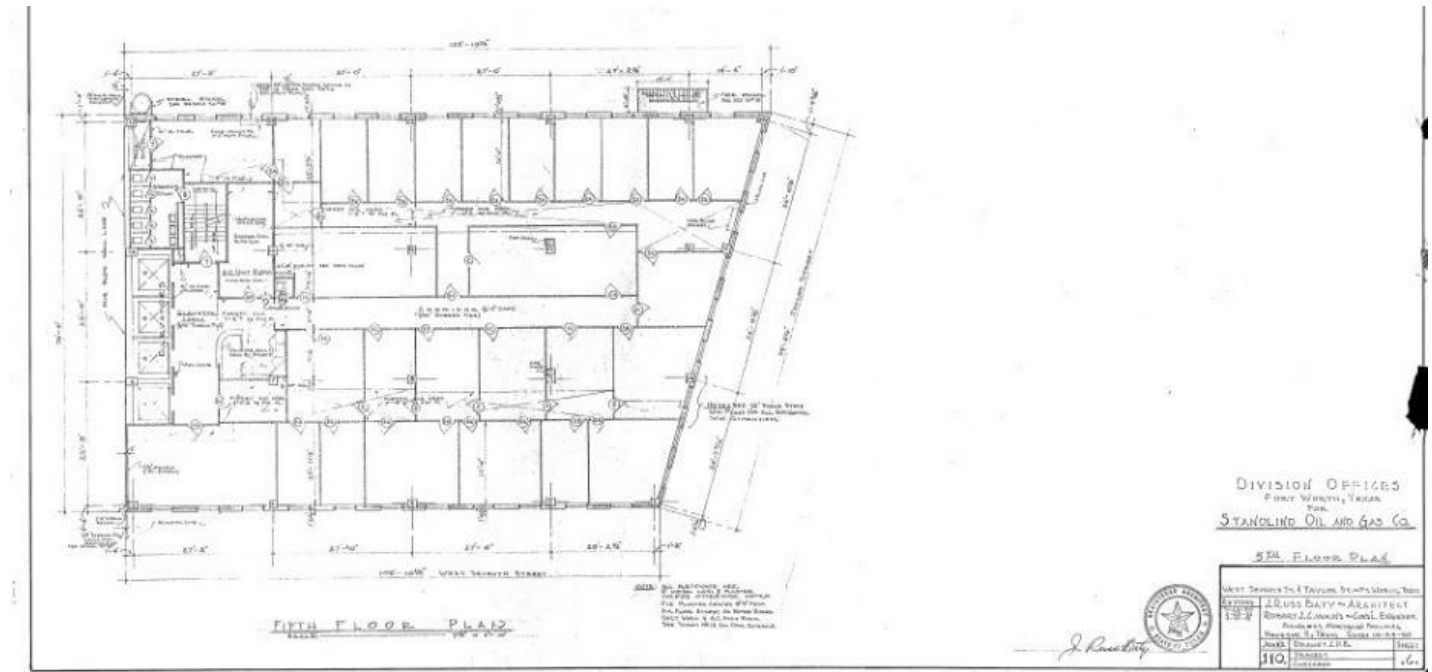


Figure 6: 11<sup>th</sup> Floor (typical altered floor plan)



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 7: “Fair Building Annex (Oil & Gas Building) & Fair Building Garage-Progress #48, 1951 (approximately).”  
Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-51-4-21, Digital ID #20096408. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 8: “Fair Building Parking Garage, construction progress #79 Addition, 1952 (approximately).” Looking NE at the west and south elevations of the Oil & Gas Building. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-4-3, Digital ID #20097169. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 9: "Oil & Gas Building construction progress photo #81, 1952 (approximately) [NW corner of building not finished out]." Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-4-8, Digital ID #20097170. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 10: Oil & Gas Building construction progress photo #82. Closeup of Bond Clothiers, 1952 (approximately).  
Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-4-9, Digital ID #20097171. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 11: The Fair Department Store/Oil & Gas Building, 1952 (approximately). View looking southwest from West 7<sup>th</sup> and Throckmorton Streets. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-1-158, Digital ID #20097666. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 12: Fort Worth skyline from the top of Medical Arts Building, 1956-08-21 [View West 7<sup>th</sup> Street from Medical Arts Building looking east down “Canyon” and “Show Road”]. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-56-1-64, Digital ID #20109930. Used with permission.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Figure 13: Exterior of Western Savings and Loan Association in the Oil & Gas Building at West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets. Shows alteration to northwest corner for recessed entrance and full-height storefront windows. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1961, 31, retrieved November 3, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

# A Great New Location . . . WESTERN SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION

... Another Milestone  
in  
Fort Worth's  
Progress



We take great pride in commending the farsightedness of the leaders who have made Western one of our most progressive Savings associations. We, of the Jesse H. Jones Interests are proud that Western Savings and Loan Association chose a prime corner location in one of our buildings . . . the Oil & Gas Bldg., at the corner of West 7th and Taylor . . . Won't you stop by during the Grand Opening Celebration and see these fine new facilities . . . and meet the friendly officers and personnel at Western Savings & Loan Association.

## Jesse H. Jones Interests

Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 14: Interior of Western Savings and Loan Association in the Oil & Gas Building at West 7<sup>th</sup> and Taylor Streets. Shows alteration to storefront windows on west elevation. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1961, 30, retrieved November 3, 2022 (<https://www.newspapers.com>).

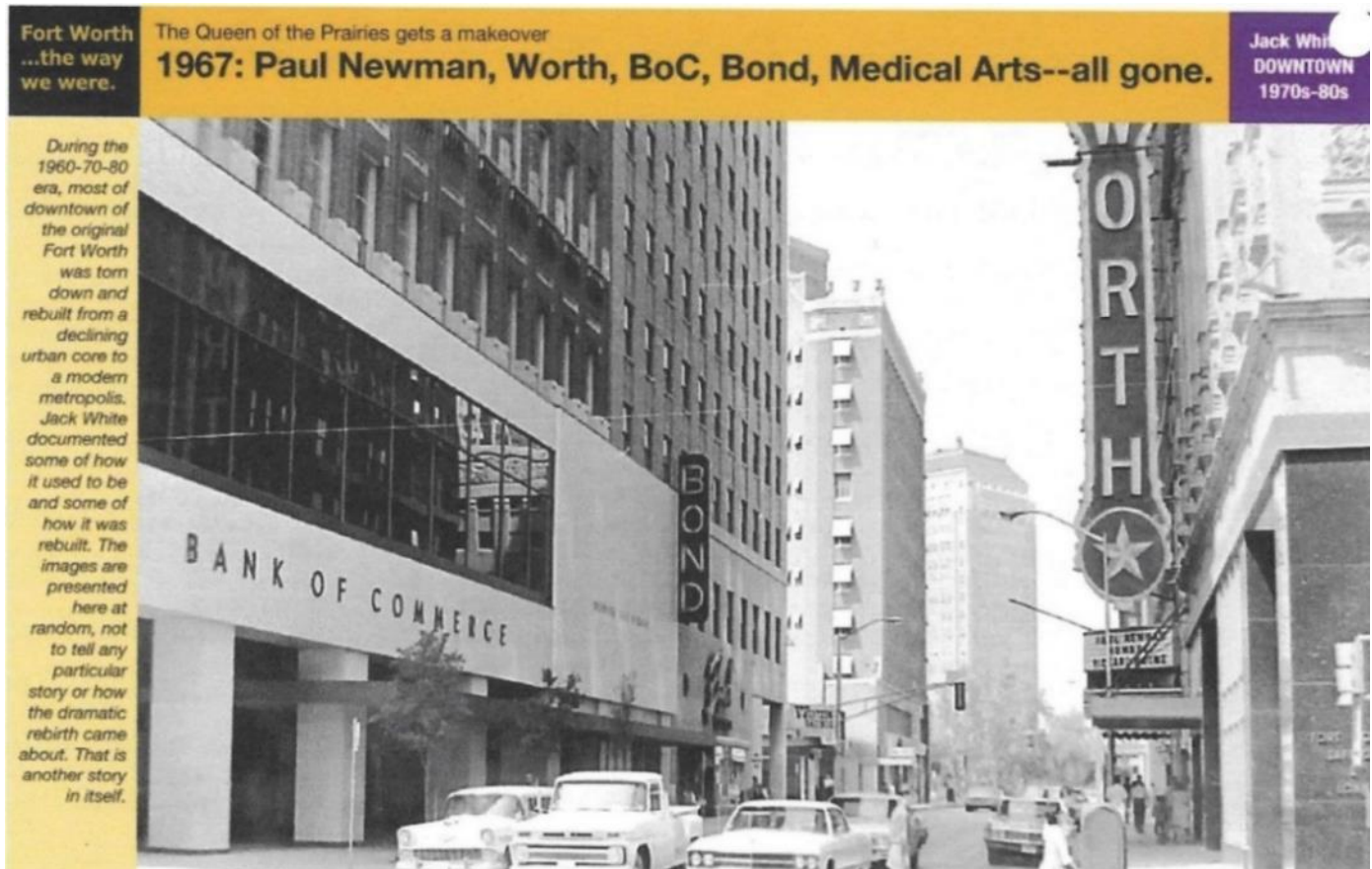


**FOCAL POINT**—A cantilevered terrazzo-tread stairway, shown in the architect's sketch, is designed to catch the eye of per-

sons visiting Western Savings and Loan Association's new offices at 7th and Taylor, which will be open for business Monday.

Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

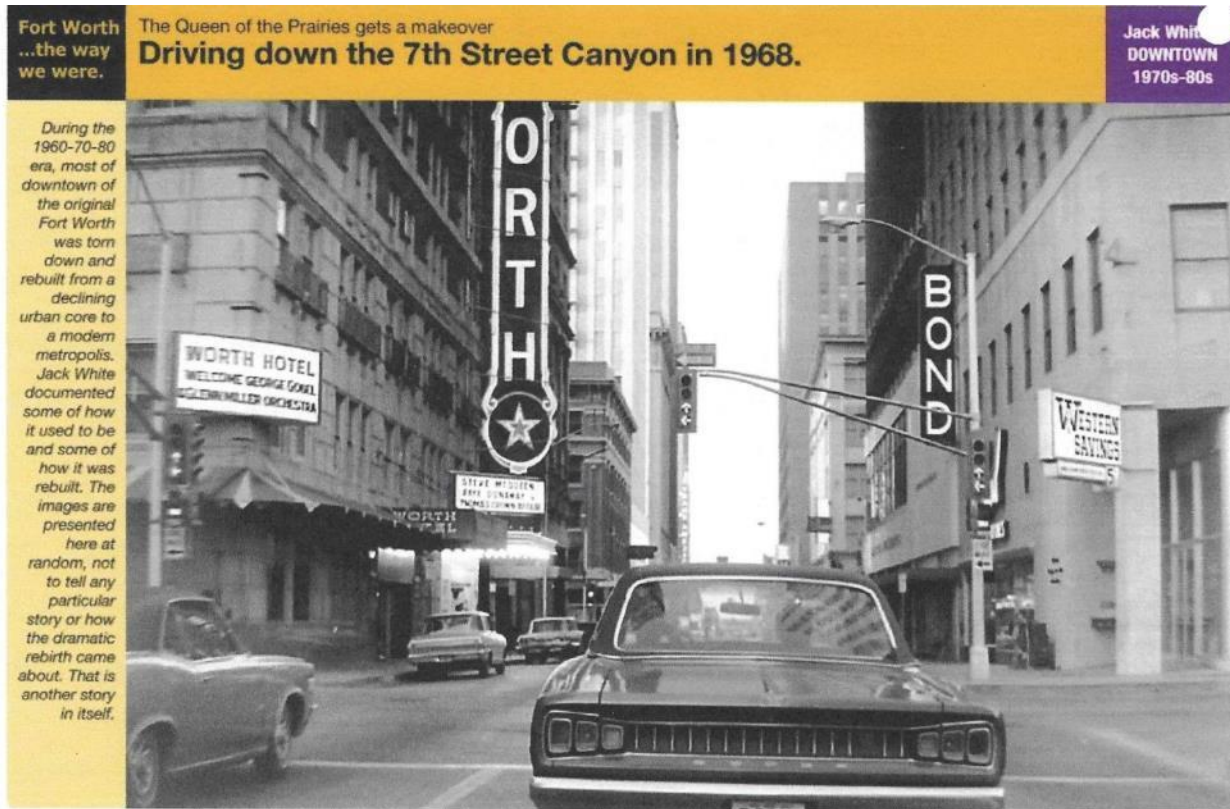
Figure 15: West 7<sup>th</sup> Street looking west at alteration to the base of the Fair Building (left) and alteration to the base of the Oil & Gas Building (by Bond sign). Jack White photograph, 1967. From *Architecture in Fort Worth*, retrieved November 2, 2022, (<https://www.fortwortharchitecture.com/oldftw/jwDT7th1967seventhst.jpg>).



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Figure 16: West 7<sup>th</sup> Street looking east from Taylor St. Oil & Gas Building on right, depicts recessed entrance at northwest corner. Jack White photograph, 1968. From *Architecture in Fort Worth*, retrieved November 2, 2022, <https://www.fortwortharchitecture.com/oldftw/jwDT7th1968.jpg>.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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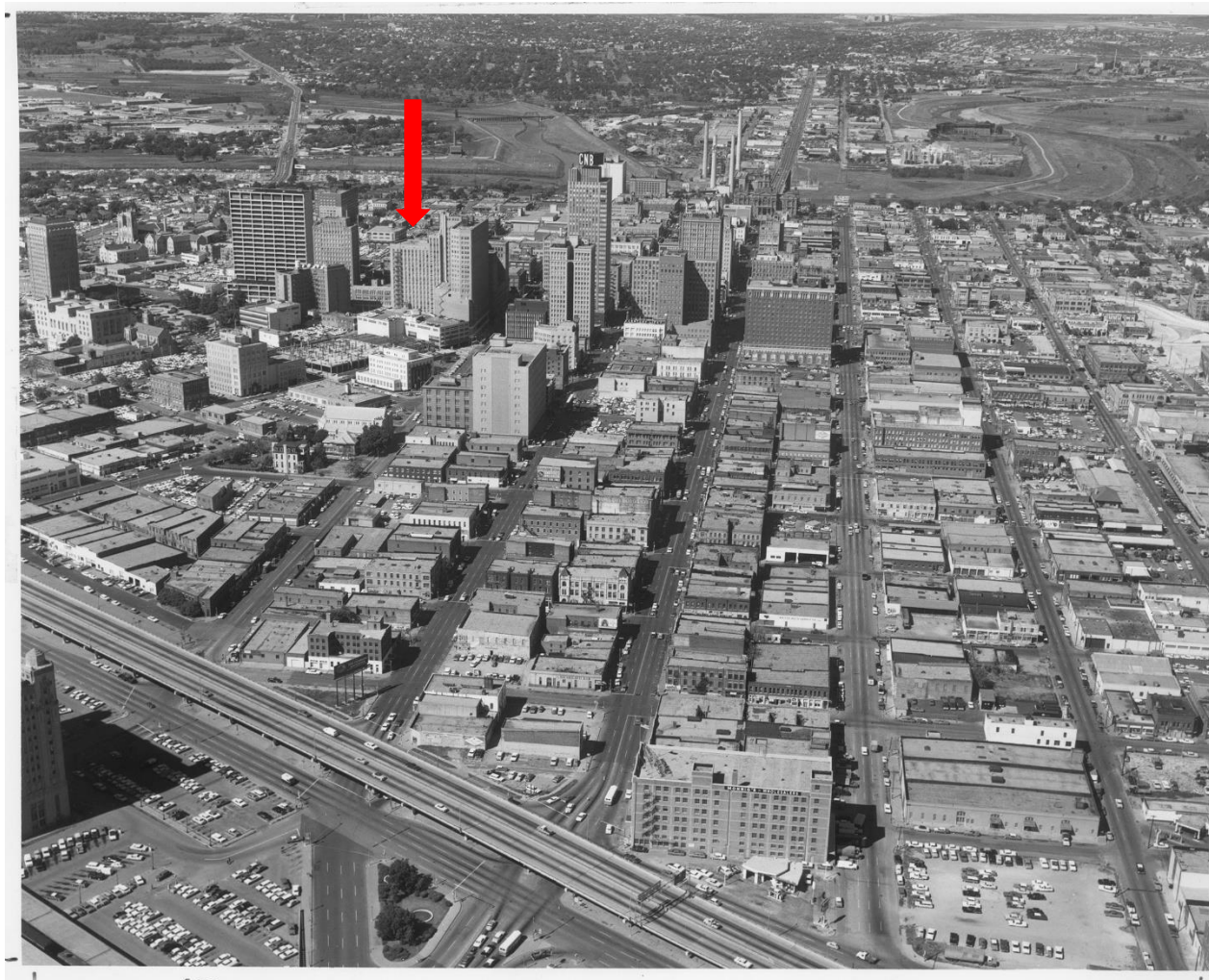
Figure 17: 1939 aerial of downtown Fort Worth showing Fair Building with parking lot prior to construction of Fair Garage and Oil & Gas Building, looking northeast. Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. "Aerial of downtown Fort Worth, showing Medical Arts building and other structures." *UTA Libraries Digital Gallery*. 1939. Accessed April 27, 2023, <https://library.uta.edu/digitalgallery/img/10011430>.



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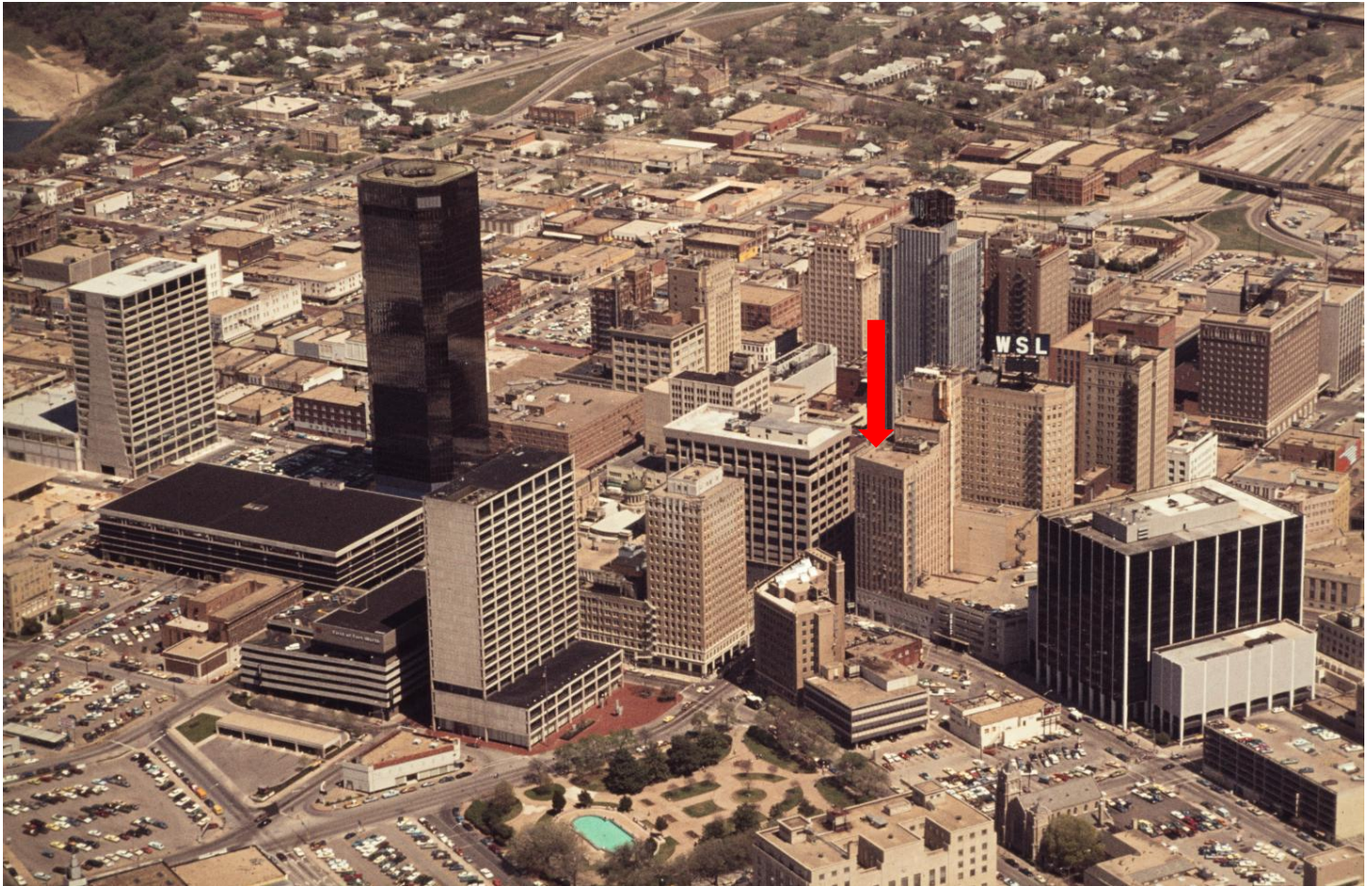
Figure 18: 1960s aerial of downtown Fort Worth showing Oil & Gas Building, looking northwest. W.D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. "An aerial of downtown Fort Worth, Texas." *UTA Libraries Digital Gallery*. 1964. Accessed April 27, 2023, <https://library.uta.edu/digitalgallery/img/10006377>.



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Figure 19: 1970s aerial of downtown Fort Worth, showing Oil & Gas Building, looking northeast. WBAP-TV (Television station : Fort Worth, Tex.). [Aerial view of downtown Fort Worth, 22], photograph, 197X; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1611219/m1/1/?q=aerial%20downtown%20fort%20worth>; accessed March 15, 2023), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

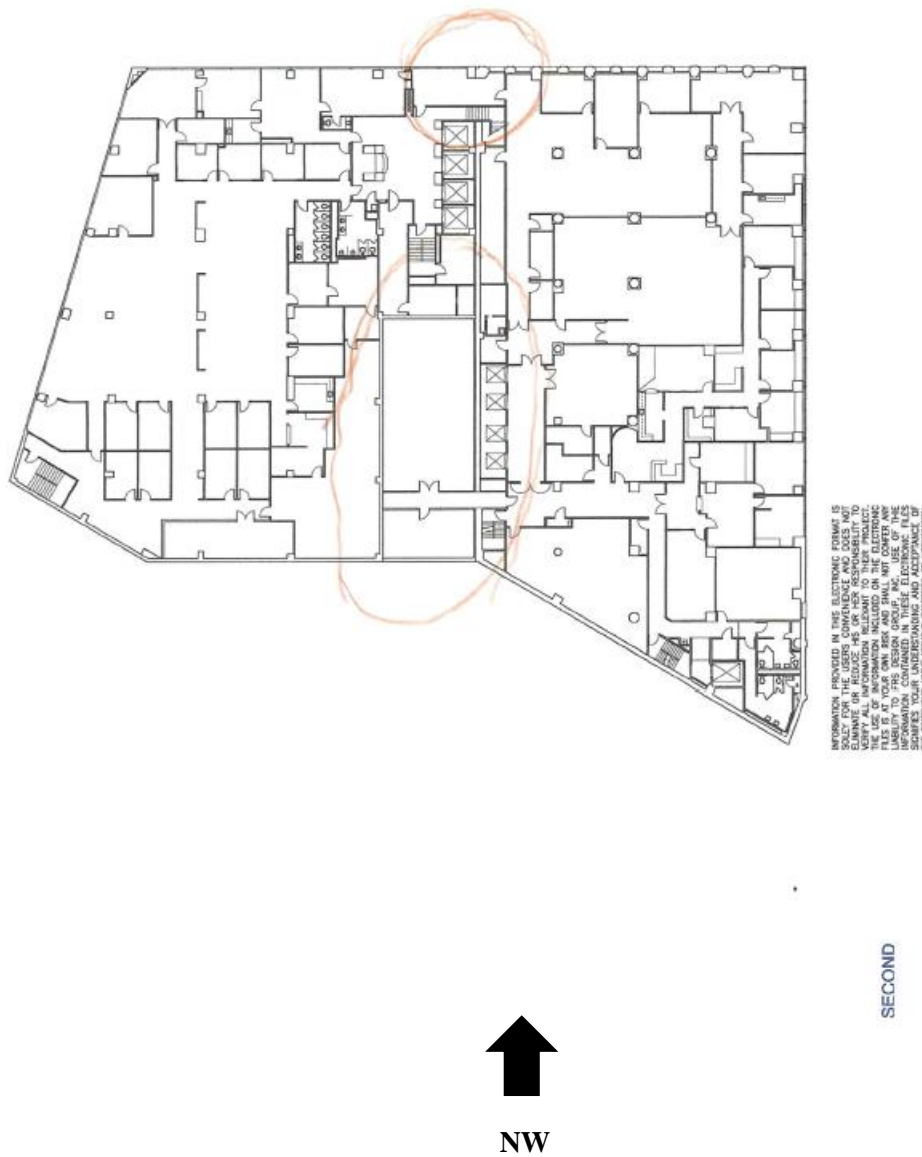
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Figure 20: 1970s aerial of downtown Fort Worth showing Oil & Gas Building, looking north. WBAP-TV (Television station : Fort Worth, Tex.). [Aerial view of downtown Fort Worth, 21], photograph, 197X;  
(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1612047/>: accessed March 15, 2023), University of North Texas Libraries, *The Portal to Texas History*, crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

Figure 21: 2016 plan showing current second floor connection to Fair Building, courtesy Sandvick Architects Inc.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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**Photos**

Photo 1: West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Canyon; Fair and Oil & Gas Buildings, left. View west/southwest.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 2: North elevation. View west/southwest.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 3: North and west elevations. View east.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 4: North and west elevations. View southeast.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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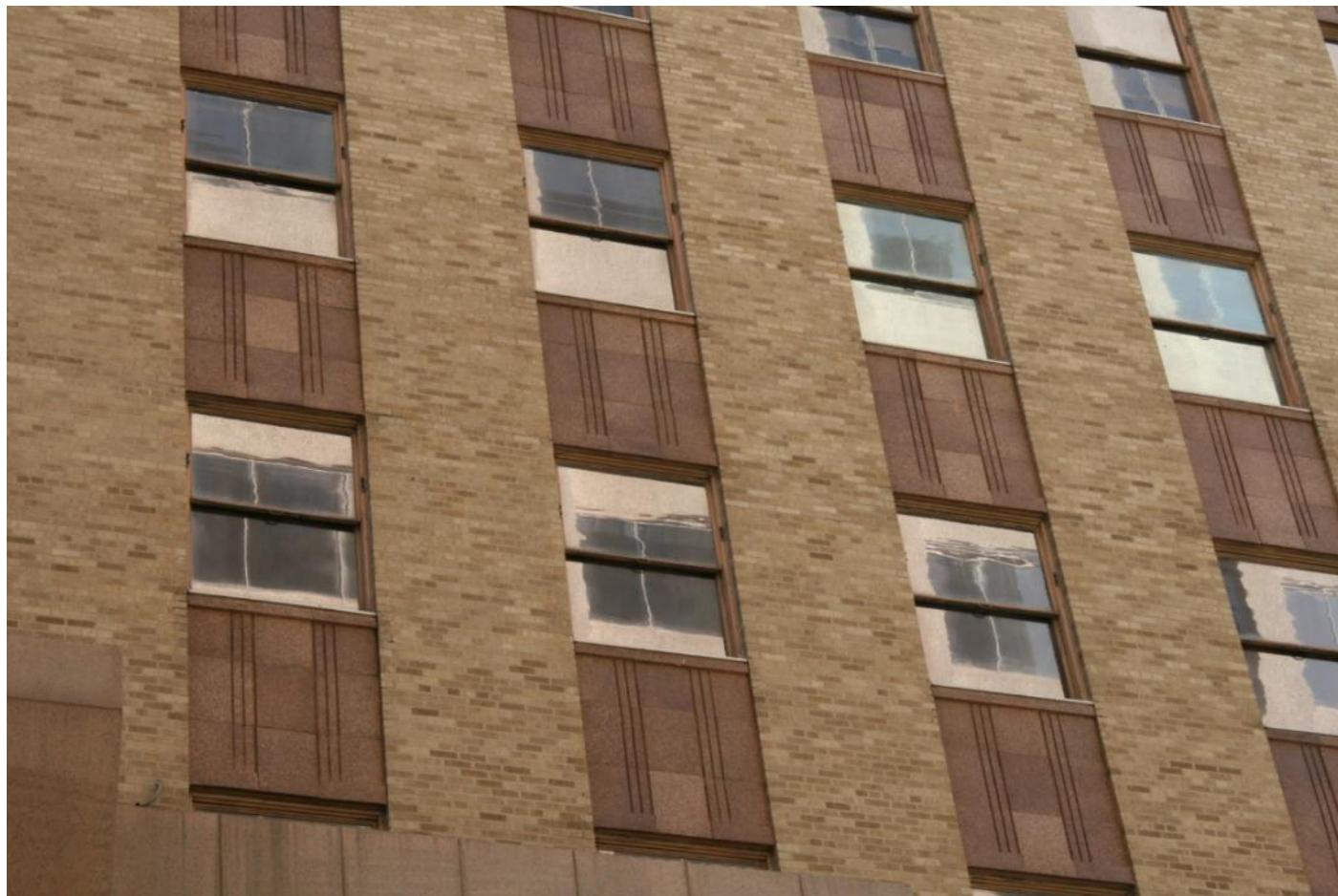
Photo 5: Base of north and west elevations. View southeast.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 6: Terra cotta spandrels, north elevation. View south.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 7: West and south elevations. View northeast.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 8: West and south elevations. View northeast.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 9: Penthouse, north elevation with brick spandrel. View south.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 10: Lobby connecting Oil & Gas Building to Fair Building. View east.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 11: Elevator lobby, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View north.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 12: South opening between Oil & Gas and Fair Buildings, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View east.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 13: Entrance to Fair Parking Garage from Oil & Gas Building, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View south.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 14: Non-historic finishes, 1<sup>st</sup> floor. View southwest.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 15: Office finishes with original marble sills, 6<sup>th</sup> floor. View southwest.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 16: Original marble wainscot, 11<sup>th</sup> floor. View southwest.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 17: Stairs in penthouse.



Oil & Gas Building, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

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Photo 18: Elevator hoists, penthouse. View southeast.

