

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

RECEIVED 2280

OMB No. 1024-0018

APR 22 2016

350

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building
Other name/site number: Cheek-Neal Coffee Warehouse
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 2017 Preston
City or town: Houston State: Texas County: Harris
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

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

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒	Private
☐	Public - Local
☐	Public - State
☐	Public - Federal

Category of Property

☒	building(s)
☐	district
☐	site
☐	structure
☐	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:

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Agriculture/Subsistence: Processing (coffee roasting and packing facility)

Current Functions: Vacant/ Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style

Principal Exterior Materials: Concrete, Brick, Metal, Glass

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 7)

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☒	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
☐	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
☐	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
☐	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Industry

Period of Significance: 1917-1949

Significant Dates: 1917, 1924

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

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

Architect/Builder: Finger, Joseph

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8 through 11)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 12)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested (*Approved January 25, 2005*)
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: Less than one acre

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (use decimal degree format)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Longitude: 29.756161° Latitude: -95.351839°

Verbal Boundary Description: The property is legally described as lots 1,2,3 and 12 and Trace 13, Block 186, SSBB, Houston, Harris County, Texas.

Boundary Justification: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Randy Pace, with Lauren Maas and Anna Mod, and National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith
Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants
Address: 10245 West Little York Road, suite 600
City or Town: Houston State: Texas Zip Code: 77040
Email: amod@swca.com
Telephone: 281-617-3217
Date: October 6, 2015

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 13 through 17)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 18 through 20)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 21 through 24)

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

2015 Photographs

Name of Property: Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building

City or Vicinity: 2017 Preston, Houston

County, State: Harris County, Texas

Photographer: Anna Mod

Date Photographed: July 2015

Location of Original Digital Files: SWCA Environmental Consultants, 10245 West Little York, Suite 600, Houston, Texas 77040

Photo #1 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0001)

East (left) and north (right) façades, camera facing southwest

Photo #2 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0002)

South (left) and east (right) façades, camera facing northwest

Photo #3 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0003)

North (left) and west (right) façades, camera facing southeast

Photo #4 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0004)

Interior, first floor, view towards former office area and southeast corner of building interior, camera facing southeast

Photo #5 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0005)

Interior, first floor, freight elevator, camera facing southeast

Photo #6 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0006)

Interior, second floor overview from southwest corner, camera facing east

Photo #7 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0007)

Interior, second floor overview from southwest corner, camera facing northeast

Photo #8 (TX_HarrisCounty_Cheek-NealCoffeeCompanyBuilding_0008)

Interior, fourth floor overview from northwest corner, camera facing southeast

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.

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Description

The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building is a five-story, 4 x 9 bay, brick clad reinforced concrete warehouse located east of downtown Houston. The building bays are defined by a regular grid of exposed, horizontal floor plates and vertical concrete columns with red brick infill. One large, steel, multi-light industrial type window is in each bay on floors two through five on the west, south and east elevations. There are triplet grouped, 1/1 wooden sash windows on the ground floor of the south (primary) façade. There are no window openings on the north elevation. The ground floor of the east elevation has a random mix of window sizes and overhead loading bays. The building features elements of the Arts and Crafts movement such as the diamond and triangular tiles set into shallow brick framed rectangular panels below each of the upper floor window openings and below the first floor wooden sash windows. The parapet is outlined with red brick and divided into three bays with small gabled parapets flanking a large, flat, central parapet that historically served as a horizontal signboard. There are two concrete loading docks; the loading dock on the east elevation appears to have been designed for train loading while the saw-toothed dock on the west elevation accommodated trucks. Despite being abandoned for decades, the building is largely unaltered and retains a high level of its architectural integrity.

The narrow elevation of the four-by-nine-bay building faces south onto Preston. The building is located on the northwest corner of the Preston and St. Emanuel intersection east of downtown Houston on the city block bounded by Preston on the south, St. Emanuel on the east, Congress to the north, and Charters on the west, a street that functions as the feeder road to U.S. Highway 59 which is in the process of being renamed Interstate 69 (IH 69). Immediately to the west of Highway 59 is the George R. Brown Convention Center (1987, expanded 2003), Discovery Green Park (2008), and Minute Maid Field (2000), the city's major league baseball park, an addition to the rear of Union Station (NRHP), once the city's passenger train station. One block to the southeast is BBVA Compass Stadium completed in 2011, a professional soccer stadium. Prior to the city's early twenty-first century investment in the convention center and sports facilities and private sector development of new apartment and condominiums, the area contained a mix of small warehouses, artist studios, underutilized and abandoned buildings, and empty lots.

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, freight and passenger rail lines crisscrossed the neighborhood. The large train shed of Union Station extended for five blocks behind the terminal ending directly across Preston from the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building. A second rail line two blocks to the northeast, "sandwiched" the building between a second cluster of tracks. Despite the heavy industrial use, the surrounding area was predominantly residential in the late nineteenth century and beginning in the first decades of the twentieth century, commercial and warehouses began to creep into the neighborhood and more rail road spurs were constructed. Currently (2015) the area has a few remaining warehouses, surface parking lots, recently constructed multi-story urban apartment buildings, and condominiums.

The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building is a five-story, 4 x 9 bay, brick clad reinforced concrete warehouse building located east of downtown Houston. The building bays are a regular grid of exposed reinforced concrete floor plates and vertical columns with red brick infill. One large, steel, multi-light industrial type window is in each bay on floors two through five on the west, south and east elevations. There are triplet grouped, 1/1 wooden sash windows on the ground floor of the south (primary) façade that extends to the first bay of the east elevation. There are no window openings on the north elevation of the five store warehouse portion and two arched windows on the north elevation of the one-story addition. This elevation has only a small, square opening in the second bay of the second floor and two infilled window openings in the third and fourth bays of the first floor. The ground floor of the east elevation has a random mix of the wooden sash windows (first bay), two smaller window openings in bays two and six (now boarded), five double wide loading bays in the third through fifth and eighth bays, a single loading opening in the sixth bay and an industrial multi-

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

light window in the ninth bay. The current and historic entrance is on Preston through a paired door opening with non-historic doors.

The building features elements reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement, such as the diamond and triangular tiles set into shallow brick framed rectangular panels below the majority of the upper floor window openings and below the first floor wooden sash windows. The five second floor bays above the single story garage addition on the west elevation have only an inset brick panel below the industrial type windows.

There is a decorative parapet on the south, east and west elevations with an ABA composition divided by short concrete pylons. The parapet's center bay is a long, narrow frieze, now blank, is outlined with red brick. The south elevation once had "Cheek Neal Coffee Company" and the west elevation, "Maxwell House Coffee - Cheek-Neal Coffee Company" and was covered over with stucco at an unknown date. The parapet is topped with a terracotta coping cap.

There are two concrete loading docks. The first, on the east elevation, is full width and rectangular in plan and appears to have accessed a rail road spur. The second, on the west elevation, covers only bays six through eight and has a saw-tooth plan to accommodate the loading and unloading of trucks.

The ground floor interior retains the remnants of the former office area in the southeast corner of the building. This is differentiated from the rest of the interior with plastered walls and columns, a decorative chair rail and baseboard. This is the area that has the wooden sash windows. Beyond this area, the floor plan is open with large concrete columns with bell shaped capitals on a regular interval and the walls are painted brick or concrete masonry unit (CMU). The first floor of the main building and the small one-story garage contain a total of 13,062 square feet; floors two through five each contain 10,500 square feet. The column spacing of the concrete columns is 17½ feet by 16½ feet. Ceiling heights on the first floor and fifth floors are twelve feet and 11-foot-3 on the second, third, and fourth floors. There is a concrete staircase with a simple pipe railing in the southwest corner of the building and a freight elevator along the east elevation – both of these elements appear on the 1924 Sanborn map.

Despite being abandoned for decades, the building retains a high degree of its architectural integrity and many original materials remain. Its integrity location is intact as well as its integrity of design, materials and workmanship – all of which retain significant original fabric with minimal alterations. Integrity of setting and association are compromised by the change to the surrounding neighborhood, most notably the addition of the large surface parking lots to the south. The building's integrity of feeling remains intact; the remaining scattered warehouses and railroad tracks in the area collectively convey the industrial feeling of this former warehouse area.

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The 1917 Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building at 2017 Preston in Houston, Texas, was designed by Houston architects Joseph Finger and James Ruskin Bailey as a regional coffee processing facility for the developers of the Maxwell House brand. The company's Houston building was one of seven similar multi-story buildings across the country where the company roasted, blended, packaged, and shipped coffee nationwide. The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Industry, at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1917-1947, beginning at the time of construction through the year the building served as a coffee processing facility.

The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building was built in 1917 for the growing coffee business interests of Joel Owsley Cheek and John William Neal, who developed the famous Maxwell House coffee brand at the company's Nashville, Tennessee headquarters. Cheek began his career in the wholesale grocery business, which included coffee, the product on which he eventually focused. During the late 19th century the grocery trade became fragmented as dealers in specialized products such as liquor, tobacco, and coffee began to specialize. Coffee, long the favorite of wealthy urbanites, became a staple consumer item during this period. But up to this time, green coffee beans were sold only in bags that had a very short shelf life, and they had to be roasted at home. In 1892 Cheek developed a popular blend of high-quality coffee beans, and Cheeks' new company, the Nashville Coffee and Manufacturing Company, was the first to successfully introduce a prepared coffee already roasted, blended, and later even ground and canned ready for home use. He persuaded Nashville's elegant Maxwell House Hotel to serve his coffee, and then he borrowed the hotel's name for his brand label. Cheek and Neal expanded their business to the extent that by the 1920s it had captured one-third of the coffee market in the United States.

Industry and Warehousing in Houston, Texas

Houston grew steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century due to ongoing enhancements to the port, the railroads, a large wave of immigrants from Southern States, and the economic stability provided by statehood. Mule-drawn streetcars provided transportation for citizens beginning in 1868. City leaders invested in the city's future and established infrastructure including electric service, paved streets, and public transportation including the retirement of the mule-drawn cars with a new electric street car system in 1891. The railroad first arrived in the late 1850s and there were 17 lines operating in Houston by 1922.¹

By the end of the nineteenth century, Houston became a regional center for agricultural commerce. An entire infrastructure was created in the way of warehouses and businesses, railroads, and banks, all to support the agricultural economy. Cotton, cattle, and timber established Houston as an agricultural trading center and laid the economic foundation and infrastructure for the petroleum and chemical industries that followed.

With the establishment of the railroads and shipping on Buffalo Bayou, warehouses became necessary for the transfer and storage of shipped goods. The level terrain north and east of Houston's downtown commercial quarter proved the ideal location. Brick and concrete framed warehouses were the dominant building type in these two areas there beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. The warehousing area, developed around rail lines and spurs, were collections of industrial facilities with the design, scale, and materials of the building stock directly reflecting the evolution of manufacturing and wholesale distribution from the initial establishment of service via the Houston Ship Channel to the end of World War II. The warehousing areas were inextricably linked with the community's maturation and the development of regional markets for agricultural, commercial, and petroleum

¹ Douglas L. Weiskopf, *Rails Around Houston* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

interests. A transportation network established Houston as the hub of a trading area that embraced southeast Texas and connected it to major metropolitan centers such as New Orleans and St. Louis. A major citywide building boom occurred between 1910 and 1930, with new construction fostering a cycle of spiraling growth. Produce and transfer warehouses, regional headquarters for national companies, and shipping and storage facilities supported the rapid growth and development of the city's industrial base during this period. It was east of downtown on the corner of Preston and St. Emanuel that the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company building was constructed in 1917.

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company in Houston

In 1884, Kentucky grocer and coffee salesman Joel Owsley Cheek moved to Nashville to establish a company to process and market roasted and blended coffee for home use. Cheek persuaded Nashville's elegant Maxwell House Hotel to serve his coffee. Soon thereafter the hotel served Cheek's blend exclusively, and Cheek borrowed the hotel's name for his brand label "Maxwell House Coffee."² On August 27, 1901, Joel Cheek and his new business partner, John W. Neal, formed the Nashville Coffee and Manufacturing Co. (later renamed the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company), and that same year began to produce Maxwell House coffee for mass consumption. Cheek and Neal aggressively expanded the company into Southern markets. In 1903 Cheek sent his son, Robert Stanley Cheek to Houston to supervise the construction and opening of a second coffee plant for Cheek-Neal Coffee Company of Nashville. The *1903-04 Houston City Directory* lists Robert S. Cheek as the Manager of the Houston Branch, of "importers, roasters and packers of coffee." The office and factory was located at 1121 Carr Street, on the southwest corner of Carr and Conti Street in the Fifth Ward. The site consisted of a three-story, brick factory building with an attached one-story warehouse running parallel and adjacent to the railroad track of the Texas and New Orleans Railroad, which afforded efficient shipping. By 1905 Robert S. Cheek had returned to Nashville and J. W. Neal had relocated to Houston to serve as Vice President of the Houston Branch of the company.

The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company continued to flourish after moving to Houston. According to a *Houston Chronicle* article dated March 25, 1917, the new, enlarged site for the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company was constructed in 1917 under the direction of John William Neal. The larger plant at 2017 Preston was "filled with state-of-the-art machinery for cleaning, roasting, grinding and packaging coffee" and cost \$100,000. When the new plant opened, the article lauded Neal as being "one of the best informed men in the American coffee industry." The building was designed by the architectural firm of Finger and Bailey, of Houston, Texas.³ The company kept growing late into the 1920s, and they expanded production throughout the country, including facilities in Richmond, Virginia, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Brooklyn. In the 1920s the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company spent huge sums of money advertising their coffee product with great return on investment. Their brand became so popular that it eventually gained a staggering one-third of the American coffee market. In 1927, a monoplane, the *Miss Maxwell House*, flew across the country to push the coffee, while a new electronic sign in New York's Times Square flashed "Good to the Last Drop." That year company netted a profit of \$2.7 million and became the leading national brand.

In 1928, the Postum Company of Battle Creek, Michigan, paid a record sum "when it acquired the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company, and the company's name was changed to Maxwell House Products Company."⁴ After the sale, J.W. Neal directed his activities in Houston. In July 1929 the Postum Company changed its name to General Foods Corporation,

² "History of Cheekwood," Cheekwood Art and Gardens. Accessed December 2004.

https://www.cheekwood.org/About/History_of_Cheekwood.aspx

³ Staff writer. "Mammoth Coffee Plant Big Factor in Houston's Industrial Development." *Houston Chronicle*, March 25, 1917, 27.

⁴ "Joel Cheek," Kraft Foods Group, accessed December 2004,

<http://www.kraftfoodsgroup.com/about/history/jocheekbio.aspx>. The exact amount was reported anywhere from \$25 million in cash and stock to \$42 million.

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

which later became part of the huge Kraft Foods conglomerate.⁵ General Foods continued its Maxwell House coffee business at 2017 Preston in the name of Cheek-Neal through 1947. Since the time Cheek-Neal Coffee Company was purchased, according to the Kraft Foods website, “there have been many improvements made in Maxwell House processing and packing methods to keep pace with the nation’s ever-changing taste for good coffee.”⁶ The Maxwell House coffee operations relocated from the nominated building to a larger, more modern facility at 3900 Harrisburg Avenue in Houston.⁷ This facility is still roasting coffee in 2015 although the ownership has changed.

Beginning in 1949 the use of the old Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building at 2017 Preston had changed as it was occupied by five different companies including ACME Hamilton Rubber; Bickely Manufacturing Corp. (rubber goods); Bickely Brothers (school furniture); Senak Company of Texas (household furniture); and the Loel Company (floor coverings). The property had been unoccupied since the 1960s. In the early 2010s, the water tower on the roof was replicated in fiberglass. The new fiberglass water tower obscures a cell tower.

Architectural Context

The architects’ choice of a reinforced concrete frame for the Cheek-Neal Building is in keeping with a heightened interest in durable, fireproof construction for industrial buildings at the turn of the 20th century. Multi-story factory buildings of the period were often constructed with brick or heavy timber, as well as fire-resistant clad steel, but after 1900, reinforced concrete became more common choice for factory construction. Concrete framing in factory buildings held many advantages over other common construction methods, including the availability of raw materials, the opportunity to infill columns with a vast number of windows, and the material’s resistance to vibrations. Concrete was often touted for its fireproof qualities, although well-designed and maintained timber-framed buildings could prove to be reliable in this area as well, at less cost.⁸

The most common forms of concrete building construction were the beam-and-girder method and full-slab method. The former was akin to common heavy timber construction and relied on a system of columns, cross beams, girders, and slab floors, the latter eliminated beams and girders in favor of flared “mushroom” columns” with substantially reinforced combination floor/ceiling slabs. The full-slab method (found in the Cheek-Neal building) provided more headroom, allowed greater flexibility for factory owners, required less carpentry for the forms, and was less expensive than the beam and girder method. For these reasons, by 1920 it became the preferred concrete framing method for industrial buildings in the United States.⁹

Typical concrete frame industrial buildings erected between 1900 and 1930 were the product of increasing standardization in construction. Most were rectangular in plan, with exposed concrete frames and minimal ornamentation. They featured repeating bays and open plans, reducing the amount spent on design, and allowing for the use of mass-produced windows. Although many architects are known for their designs for industry, reinforced concrete factories could be built without architects. Historian Amy Slaton summarizes the resulting effect on the landscape:

Concrete construction celebrated standardization of process and product...This standardization of work, both manual and administrative, in factory construction was paired with standardization of product:

⁵ “Joel Cheek,” Kraft Foods Group, accessed December 2004, <http://www.kraftfoodsgroup.com/about/history/jocheekbio.aspx>.

⁶ Cole’s City Directories

⁷ Pace, Randy, City of Houston Landmark application for the Cheek-Neal Coffee Warehouse, 2005

⁸ Slaton, Amy E. *Reinforced Concrete and the Modernization of American Building, 1900-1930*. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 134-37.

⁹ Slaton, 134.

Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

thousands of concrete factories erected after 1900 were almost indistinguishable in appearance. Their expose concrete skeletons, uniformly large windows, and complete lack of exterior ornamentation rendered them virtually anonymous as they filled more and more of the industrial landscape in America.¹⁰

The Cheek-Neal Building is structurally modern, but features a classical façade organization, with bays separated by structural concrete frame members, and a simplified cornice reminiscent of late 19th-century commercial buildings. It stands as one of the few industrial buildings of its type and scale in the neighborhood immediately east of downtown Houston.

Joseph Finger, Architect

Joseph Finger was born on March 7, 1887 in Bielitz, Austria to Henri and Hani Finger. Following the completion of his primary, secondary, and technical education there, he immigrated to the United States in 1905. Finger initially settled in New Orleans, LA and moved to Houston three years later in 1908. There, he worked in the branch office of Dallas architect, C. D. Hill and Co. In 1912, Finger became a junior partner of Houston architect Lewis Sterling Green. From 1914 to 1919 he partnered with James Ruskin Bailey when the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building was designed and constructed. Finger worked with Lamar Q. Cato from 1920 to 1923 then practiced under his own name from 1923 to 1944. From 1944 until his death in 1953, he worked in partnership with George W. Rustay.¹¹

During his career, Finger built extensively throughout Houston and the surrounding area. Beth Israel Temple (Now the Houston Community College Heinen Theater, NRHP) was one of his first works in the early 1920s.¹² His other religious works include: the Congregation Beth Israel Temple (1925), Congregation Beth Israel Mausoleum (1935), and the Congregation Beth Yeshurun Synagogue (1949).¹³ Finger's commercial and office work includes: the American National Insurance Company Building in Galveston (1913), the A.C. Burton Auto Showroom (1929), and the Clarke Courts printing plant (1936, NRHP). He also designed retail stores for Houston business including Everitt-Buelow (1926), Levy's (1930), and Battlestein's (1923, 1936, 1950), and the Byrd's Department Store. Finger's extensive work in Houston shaped the city's appearance and growth, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. His Art Deco works like Houston City Hall (1939, NRHP) and the Houston Turn-Verein (1929, demolished) placed Houston at the forefront of modern architecture, demonstrating the city's drive to embrace modern ideas and technology in its built environment. Finger was a member of the American Institute of Architects. He was also a member of Congregation Beth Israel, the Independent Order of B'nai Brith, the Houston Turnverein, the Westwood Country Club, Chamber of Commerce, and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Joseph Finger died on February 6, 1953, in Houston.¹⁴

The Cheek-Neal company's Houston coffee processing building was one of seven similar multi-story facilities across the country that roasted, blended, packaged and shipped coffee nationwide. The building was designed by Joseph Finger and James Bailey in 1917 for the growing coffee business of Joel Cheek and J. W. Neal, the developers of the Maxwell House coffee brand. The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company building is nominated to the national Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the area of Industry, with significance at the local level and a period of significance of 1917 to 1947.

¹⁰ Slaton, 128.

¹¹ Fox, Stephen, "FINGER, JOSEPH," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffi37>), accessed May 01, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

¹² Kelly, Jeffery S., "Finger on the Pulse of the Times: Immigrant Guided Houston's Architecture for More than Two Decades," *The Houston Post*, July 4, 1987.

¹³ Fox, Stephen, "FINGER, JOSEPH."

¹⁴ Ibid.

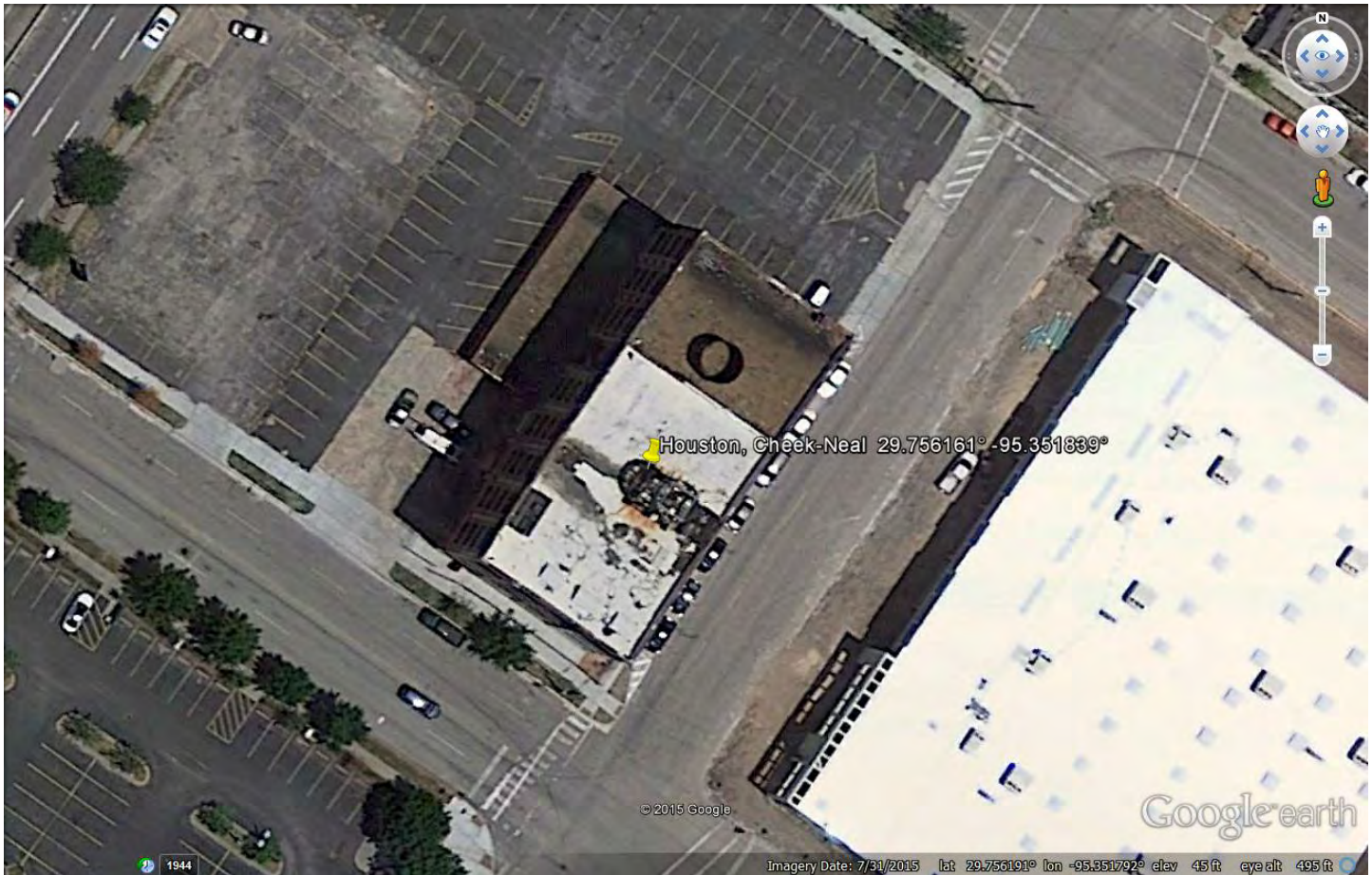
Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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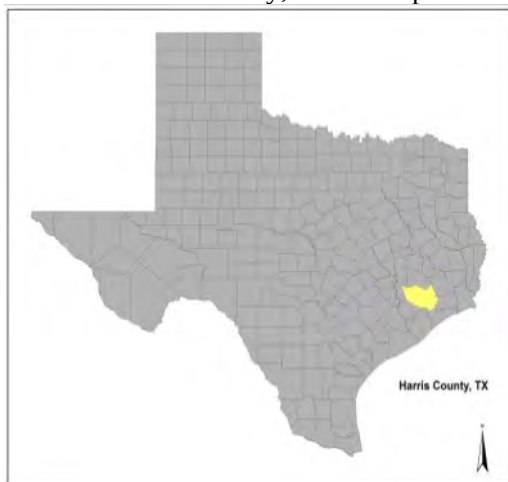
Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Google Earth, Accessed November 11, 2015.

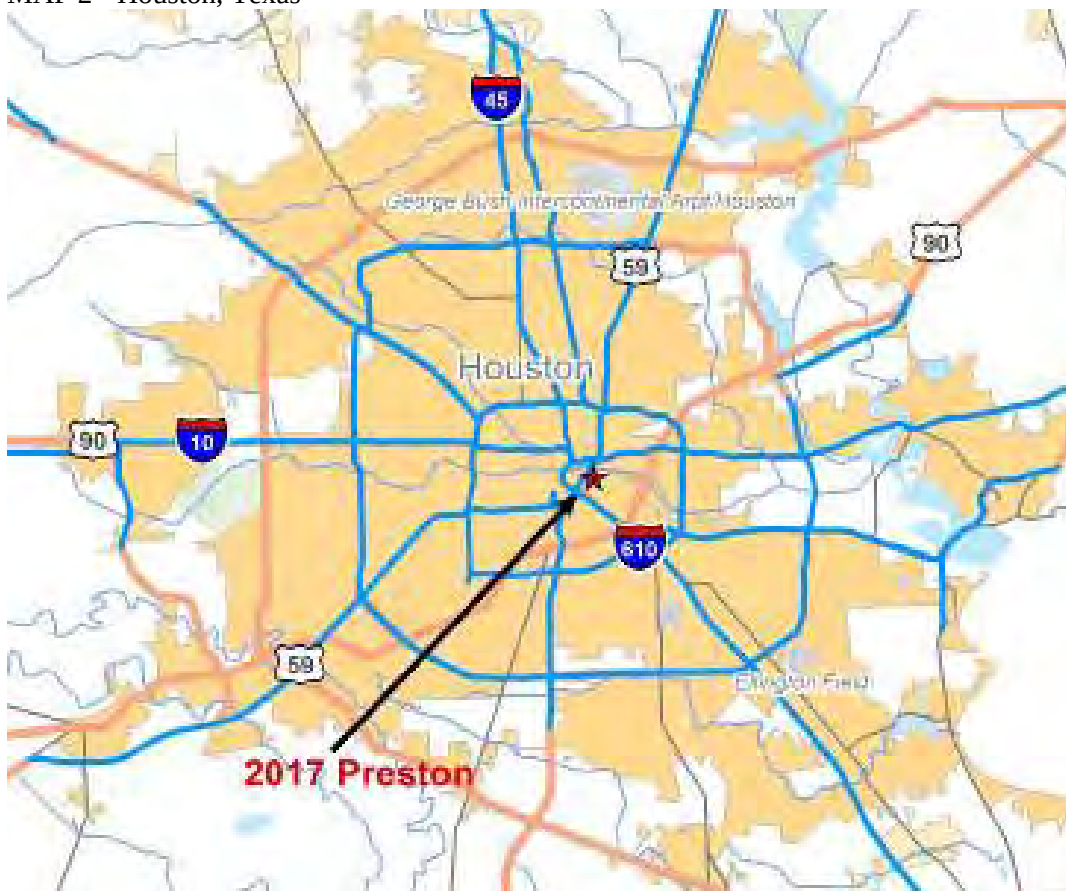


Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

MAP 1 - Harris County, Texas Map

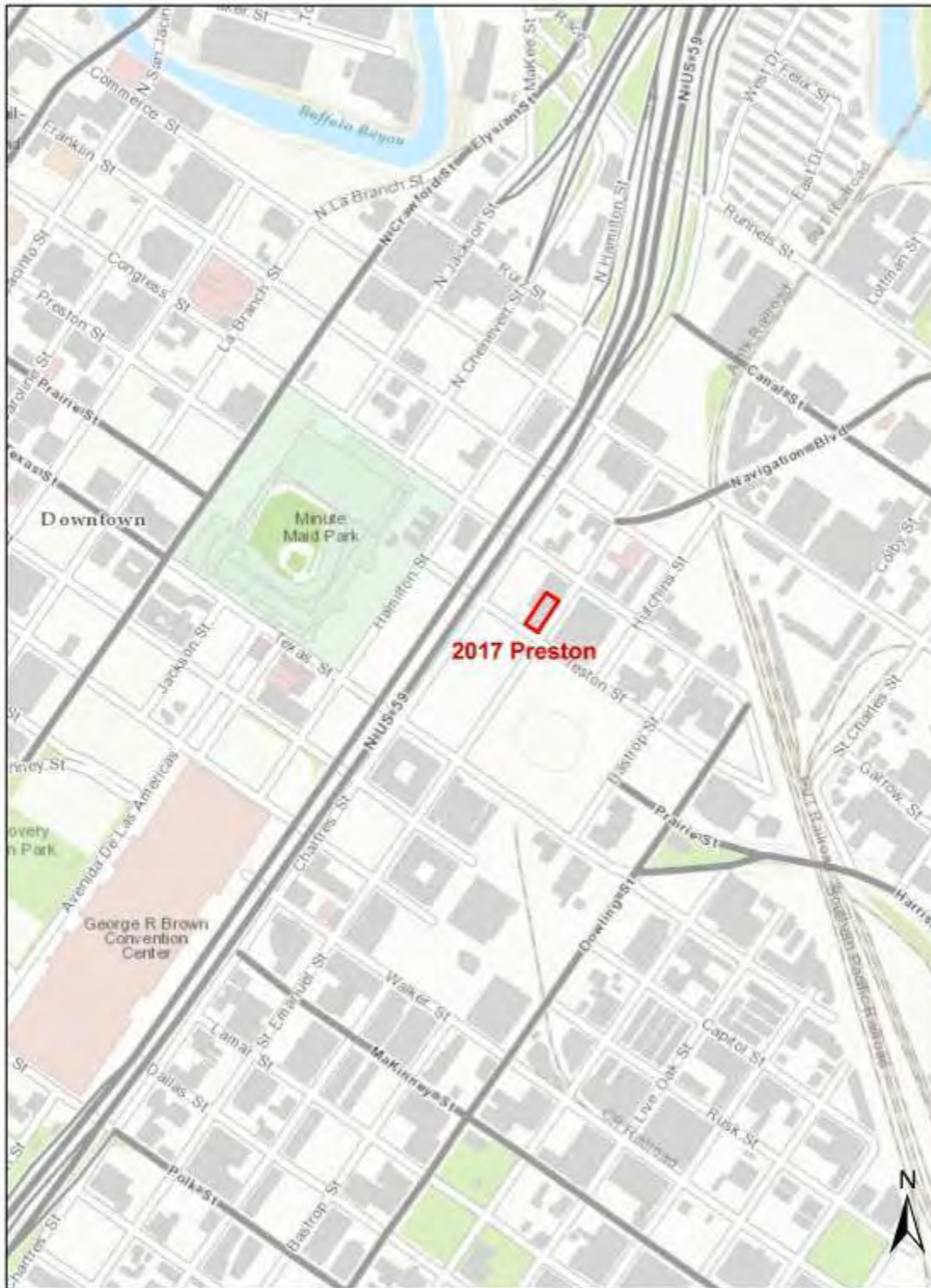


MAP 2 - Houston, Texas



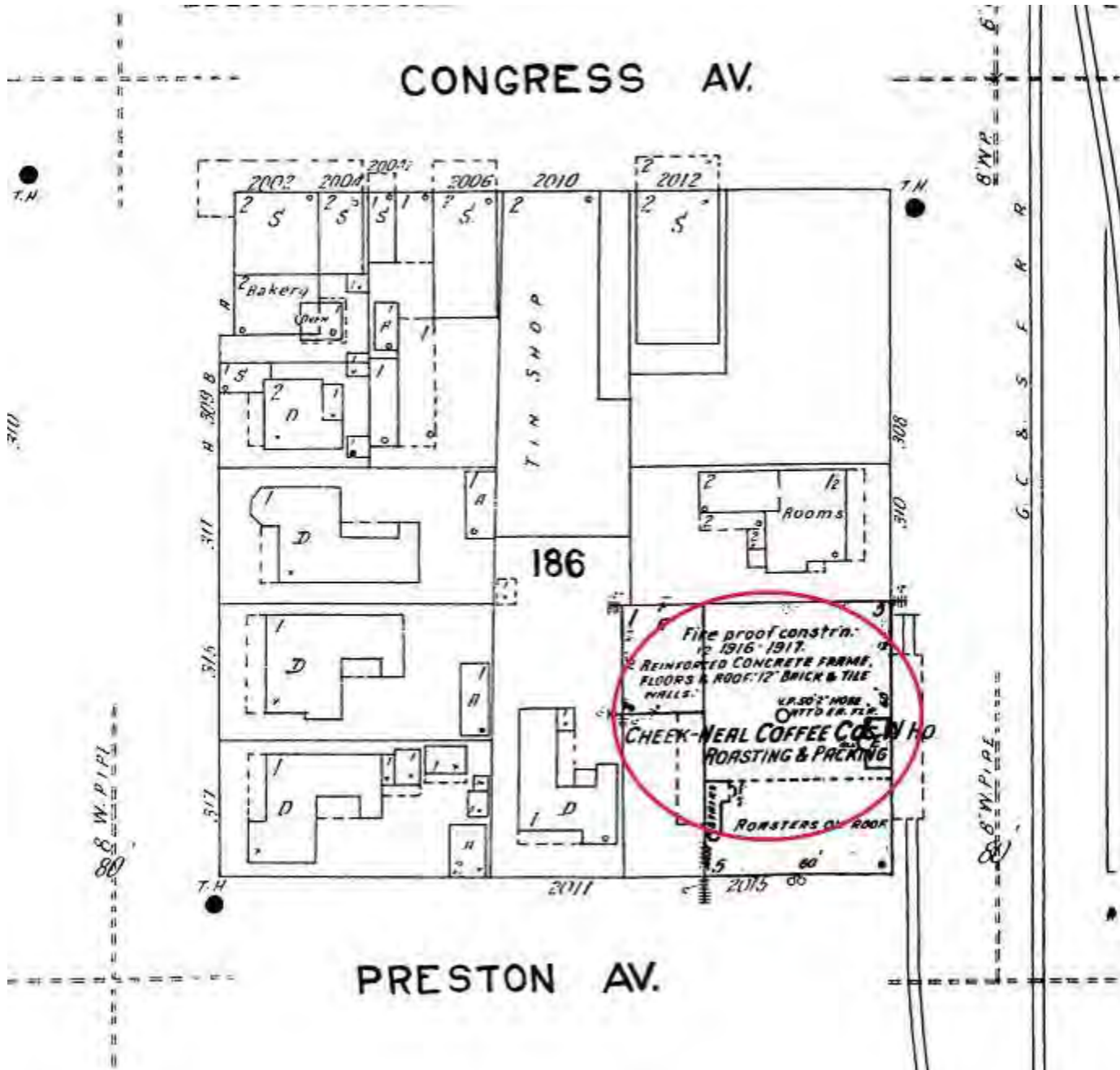
Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

MAP 3 - The Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building in central Houston



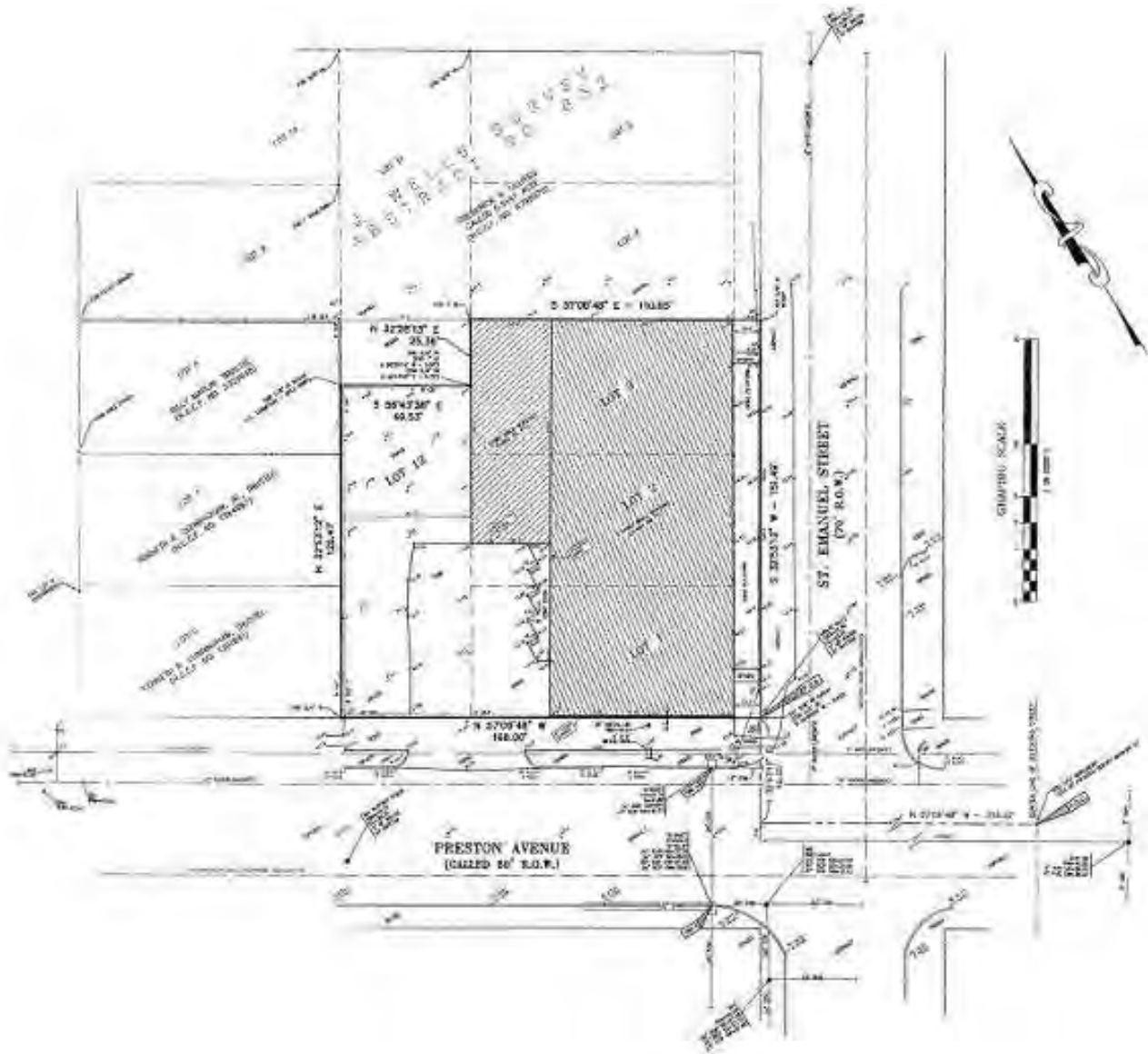
Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 1 - Sanborn Map of Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building – 1924, Vol 1, Sheet 32



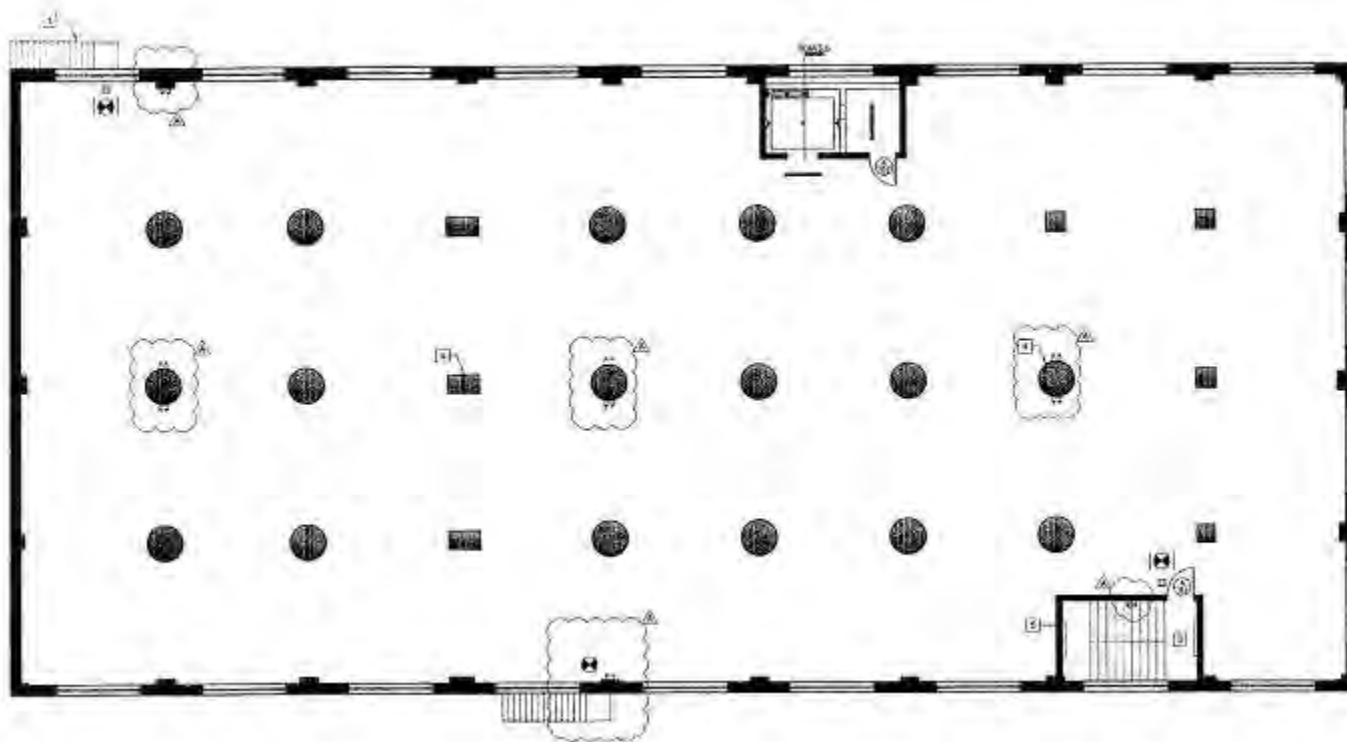
Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2 - Site Plan – Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 4 - Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building – Typical 2nd-5th Floor Plan



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 5 – West and south elevations of Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, view northeast, c. 1920.
Courtesy: Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photographs

Photo #0001

East (left) and north (right) façades, camera facing southwest, 2015.



Photo #0002

South (left) and east (right) façades, camera facing northwest, 2015.



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo #0003

North (left) and west (right) elevations, camera facing southeast, 2015.



Photo #0004

Interior, first floor, view towards former office and southeast corner of the building interior, camera facing southeast, 2015.



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo #0005

Interior, First floor, freight elevator, view southeast, 2015.



Photo #0006

Interior, Second floor, view east from the southwest corner, 2015.



Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo #0007

Interior, Second floor, view northeast from the southwest corner, 2015.



Photo #0008

Interior, Fourth floor, view southeast from northwest corner, 2015.

















