

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY  
MAIL ORDER PLANT

HABS No. IL-1187

Bounded by Lexington Street (north),  
Grenshaw Street (south), Kedzie Avenue (east),  
and Independence Boulevard (west)  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPY OF MEASURED DRAWING

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT

HABS No. IL-1187

Location:

Bounded by Lexington Street (north), Grenshaw Street (south), Kedzie Avenue (east), and Independence Boulevard (west)  
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

Quad:

Englewood Quadrangle, Illinois - Cook County

UTM:

NE: 16.441400.4635570  
SE: 16.441405.4635165  
SW: 16.440280.4635160  
NW: 16.440280.4635560

Chronology of Construction:

1905-1906

Merchandise Building (basement to ninth floor, Sections A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I)  
Merchandise Building Annex A (basement to third floor, Sections J, K, L, M, N, O)  
Merchandise Building Annex B (basement to third floor, Sections P, Q, R, S)  
Printing Building (first to fourth floors)  
Power House (basement and one story)  
Administration Building (basement and two stories)  
Paint Factory (basement and two stories)

1907

Carpenter Shop (two stories)  
Old Garage (one story)  
Garden and Pergola

1908

Men's Field House (one story)  
Women's Field Houses (one story)

1909

Printing Building Annex (first to fourth floor)

1910

YMCA Building (basement and five stories)  
Addition to Merchandise Building Annex A (fourth to ninth floors Sections J, K)  
Addition to Merchandise Building Annex B (fourth to ninth floors Sections P, Q)

1911

Apartment Building (basement and two stories)  
Fire Station (two stories)  
Engine House (one story)

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant  
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1912

Box Factory (two stories)  
Grocery Building (basement to sixth floor Sections 11 and 12)  
Wall Paper Mill (first to fifth floor)  
Central Park Building (five stories)  
Property Building (five stories)

1913

Addition to Printing Building (one story portion along tracks, at south side of Annex)  
Standard Brands Building (two stories)

1913-1916

Addition to Merchandise Building Annexes (fourth to ninth floors, Sections R, S)

1914

Addition to Administration Building (third through fifth floors)  
Addition to Printing Building (fifth and sixth floors)

1917

Addition to Administration Building, Service Building (basement and first floor)  
Addition to Merchandise Building (fourth to ninth floors, Sections L, M, N)  
Fillmore Street Garage (one story)

1918

Manufacturing Building No. 1

1919

New Paint Factory (basement to fifth floor)  
Addition to Paint Factory (third and fourth floors)  
Addition to Wall Paper Mill (first through fifth floors)  
Green House

1920 - 1930

Metal Cabinet Works (one story)  
Garage (one story)  
Storage Building  
Service Station and Auto Parts Building  
Warehouse  
Garden Shop

1949

Allstate Building (basement plus ten stories)

1964  
Catalogue Operations Building  
Tower Automotive Center  
West Parking Deck (three levels)

1964-1969  
East Parking Deck

**Architects:**

Nimmons and Fellows (George C. Nimmons and  
William K. Fellows)  
George C. Nimmons & Co  
Nimmons & Co.  
Nimmons, Carr & Wright

**Engineers:**

Adams and Schwab, Consulting Engineers (Martin  
C. Schwab)  
E.C. and R.N. Shankland, Structural Engineers

**Builder:**

Thompson Starrett Company

**Present Owner:**

Sears, Roebuck and Company  
Hoffman Estates, Illinois

**Present Occupant:**

Sears, Roebuck and Company

**Present Use:**

Administration Building (3333 West Arthington  
Street) - offices  
Merchandise Building (924 South Homan Avenue) -  
vacant  
Printing and Advertising Building (3301 West  
Arthington Street) - vacant  
Power House (931 South Homan Avenue) - heating  
Paint Factory (3350 West Fillmore Street) and Wall  
Paper Mill (1012 South Spaulding Avenue and 3340  
West Fillmore Street) - vacant  
Allstate Building (3245 West Arthington Street) -  
vacant  
YMCA Building (3210 West Arthington Street) -  
rehabilitation center

The Sears, Roebuck, and Company Mail Order Plant  
was constructed for and has remained in use by  
Sears, Roebuck and Company with exceptions as  
follows. The YMCA Building is now owned by the  
Safer Foundation, and is used as a rehabilitation  
center.



Significance:

The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant in Chicago was the primary facility of the nation's largest mail order and merchandise concern. The Mail Order Plant was originally constructed in 1905-1906, and consisted of the Merchandise Building, Administration Building, Printing and Advertising Building, Power House, YMCA Building, and Paint Factory. These buildings are all extant on the site today, together with the Wall Paper Mill (1912) and the Allstate Building (1949). The original buildings of the Mail Order Plant were designed by the nationally significant architectural firm of Nimmons and Fellows. Successor firms to Nimmons and Fellows, including George C. Nimmons & Co., Nimmons & Co., and Nimmons, Carr & Wright, designed later structures at the site.

The Sears catalogue offered everything needed for house, farm, and family to rural Americans in the early part of this century. From the Mail Order Plant in Chicago, millions of orders were sent across the country by rail and by truck, over a period of more than 80 years. After decades of successful growth, retail sales gradually replaced catalogue orders as the major portion of Sears, Roebuck and Company's business. The Chicago plant ceased mail order operations in 1987.

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Date:

April 20, 1994

## History of Sears, Roebuck and Company

### Context

Chicago provided the ideal environment for the development of Richard Sears' mail order company. Incorporated as a city on 4 March 1837, Chicago had grown rapidly in its first four decades. Its location made the city a center for transportation by water via the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, and by rail between Eastern cities and the Western farms and ranches of the mid-century. The downtown was a bustling center of frame buildings with access to commerce through docks along the Chicago River. The city's population was more than 298,000 by 1870, and the metropolitan area was home to more than 400,000 people.

The great Fire of October, 1871, destroyed the central business district. However, Chicago became a place of even greater opportunity as the downtown was quickly rebuilt. It was this period of rapid growth, beginning after the Fire and continuing until World War I, that saw the founding and initial development of Sears, Roebuck, and Company in Chicago. Another major mail order concern, Montgomery Ward and Company, had established its offices in 1872, the year following the Fire. In that year, more than 300,000 square feet of office space opened in Chicago, and construction continued until the city offered nearly one million square feet of new office space by 1892. Innovations in building technology including steel structural framing, elevators, and plate glass, led to a downtown of highrise masonry and steel structures rather than wood. These new buildings were heated by steam boilers, and lighted by gas until 1887 when electric lighting became available. Water service and drainage were provided through cast iron pipe.

By the 1890s, 24 passenger-carrying railroads used stations in Chicago, with many of the major stations for national travel built during the 1880s and 1890s. For local transportation, the horsedrawn streetcars of mid-century were replaced by cable cars by the 1880s, and in 1888 the city's rapid transit system was instituted. These transit systems provided for access to the downtown from bedroom communities, and the suburbs began to burgeon. By 1900, the city's population was more than 1,698,000; ten years later the city had grown to a center of more than 2,185,000 persons.

It was in this environment of activity and progress that the firm of Sears, Roebuck and Company established its roots. By 1906, the company was situated in its new Mail Order Plant on the city's West Side, poised for growth into a national institution.

### Founders of the Company

Richard Warren Sears was born on December 7, 1863, in Stewartville, Minnesota, and was educated at public schools. His father, a farmer-blacksmith, lost his money in a stock farm and died in 1878. The young Sears left school and learned telegraphy in order to support himself, his mother, and sisters. He went to work for the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad. In 1886, at age 23, he was earning \$6 per week as the telegrapher and station agent for the railroad in the North Redwood station, near Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Sears supplemented his income by trading lumber, coal, and other commodities with local settlers and native Americans.

The inception of Sears' career as a mail order entrepreneur began when he obtained for half price a cash-on-delivery express shipment of watches that a local jeweler had refused. He was able to buy the watches for \$12 and sell them for \$14 rather than the usual price of \$25. Sears sent samples to other agents along the railroad, who began to sell for him. After six months, he had made \$5,000 in this business.<sup>1</sup>

Sears then left railroading and moved to Minneapolis, where he founded the R.W. Sears Watch Company. He used express agents for selling because they were bonded, but also began to advertise through letters, circulars, and periodicals. To furnish repairs to watches, Sears hired watchmaker Alvah Curtis Roebuck in 1887. In addition to watches, Sears began to offer other merchandise including jewelry through the mail.

In 1889, Sears sold his business for approximately \$100,000 and moved to Iowa to become a banker. Part of Sears' agreement for the sale of his business was that he would not sell watches under his own name for three years. Within a year, he had decided against a new career in banking, and had returned to Minneapolis. There he founded a watch and jewelry firm, the Warren Company, and rehired Alvah Roebuck in 1891.

In 1892, the firm that was to become Sears, Roebuck and Company was incorporated as A.C. Roebuck, Inc. In 1893, the three-year restriction that prevented Sears from selling watches under his own name ended, and the firm was renamed Sears, Roebuck and Company with Richard Sears as president. The early years of the firm, and Sears' role in its development, are discussed below. In 1895, Sears married Anna Lydia Meckstroth, and the couple had four children.

One of Sears' biographers has commented that Sears "was one of the great promotional geniuses in American business history," but that he was also "a poor businessman and an inept manager."<sup>2</sup> None the less, it is Sears' successes that are remembered, as together with his partners he developed his fledgling mail order watch business into one of the largest and best known merchandise companies in the world.

Sears served as president of the company until November 21, 1908, when he resigned after disagreements with his partners. He served as chairman of the board, and then as director until November 26, 1913. His health was poor in his later years. Sears spent his later years farming in Waukesha, Wisconsin, until his death at age 51 on September 28, 1914.

Alvah Curtis Roebuck was born January 9, 1864, in Lafayette, Indiana. He learned watch repair through a correspondence course. By age 23, he was earning \$3.50 per week and board by operating a watch repair shop in a Hammond, Indiana, delicatessen. In 1887, Roebuck was hired by Richard Sears as a watch repairman for Sears' mail order business.

Roebuck has been described as gentle and quiet, Sears as energetic and dynamic. Roebuck was loyal to Richard Sears and to the company through the years in which Sears left the business to try banking in Iowa, and the following decade of success in which chaos ruled

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Mahoney, *The Great Merchants* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), page 218.

<sup>2</sup> James C. Worthy, *Shaping an American Institution: Robert E. Wood and Sears, Roebuck* (Urbana, Illinois and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), page 21.

the company's operations. However, by 1895, Roebuck was no longer comfortable with Sears' management of the firm, and sold his portion of the business to Sears.

Roebuck remained employed by the firm as head of the watch department. He later formed a company that manufactured stereopticons, motion-picture projectors, and typewriters. Roebuck sold that firm for \$150,000 in 1925 and settled in Florida, where he became a real estate entrepreneur. After the Florida land boom collapsed, Roebuck returned to Chicago and again worked for Sears beginning in 1933. In the following year, he began to make special appearances in retail stores, a practice which continued until his death in 1948 at age 84. As his biographers have noted, Roebuck did not attain the wealth that Richard Sears or Julius Rosenwald garnered; on the other hand, he lived a much longer life and enjoyed better health than either Sears or Rosenwald.

Julius Rosenwald was born August 12, 1862, in Springfield, Illinois, where his parents were German immigrants and his father had a clothing business. By the age of 11, Rosenwald had found work as a peddler. At age 16, after two years of high school, he went to work for two of his uncles in their wholesale clothing business, Hammerslough Brothers, in New York City.

By age 21, Rosenwald had a growing retail clothing business on Fourth Avenue in New York City. Through his business, he recognized a need for clothing manufacture for sales to mail order firms, and decided to return to Chicago to pursue this line of business. In October, 1885, Rosenwald, his brother Morris, and their cousin Julius Weil leased a loft in the Farwell Building in Chicago and began to manufacture men's summer clothing under the firm name, Rosenwald & Weil.

In 1890, Rosenwald married Augusta Nusbaum. Their son Lessing was born in 1891; the couple later had another son and three daughters. Augusta Nusbaum's brother, Aaron, was to be instrumental in setting up the partnership of Rosenwald with Richard Sears. Lessing Rosenwald was to succeed his father as chairman of the board at Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Julius Rosenwald's involvement in the evolution of Sears, Roebuck and Company is described below.

After joining Sears, Roebuck and Company, Rosenwald devoted his adult life to the business he called "the store," with the exception of the years of the First World War. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Rosenwald as a member of Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defence, where he served as chairman of the committee on supplies. When the council was taken over by the War Industries Board, Rosenwald became involved in other war-related work until 1919. Even when he visited the troops in France, Rosenwald brought Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogues for them to read.

Rosenwald was devoted to his mother, and visited her every day on his way to work.<sup>3</sup> He was as well known for his philanthropic efforts as for his successes in business. It was said of Rosenwald, "He is a good Samaritan, a humanitarian.... Whenever Julius Rosenwald gives,

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<sup>3</sup> George F. Redmond, *Financial Giants of America*, Volume 1, (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1922), page 101.

he gives like a king."<sup>4</sup> In 1912, on his fiftieth birthday, Rosenwald made charitable contributions of \$700,000 including \$250,000 to the University of Chicago, \$250,000 for a Jewish Charity building on west side of Chicago, \$50,000 for a social workers' country club near Chicago, and \$25,000 for Tuskegee Institute programs. In March, 1917, Rosenwald gave the American Jewish Relief Committees a matching donation of \$1,000,000.

Inspired by reading *Up from Slavery* and by meeting Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald supported programs to improve the quality of life for black Americans. In 1911, he offered \$25,000 toward construction of a YMCA for blacks to each community that raised a matching fund of \$75,000 by public subscription within five years. More than 12 cities qualified. He established many public schools for blacks in the South by providing partial funding and encouraging community funding between 1917 and 1932. He also served as a Trustee of Tuskegee Institute.

In 1917, Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund. When the Fund was reorganized in 1928, all funds were to be spent within 25 years of endower's death. When Rosenwald died on January 6, 1932, at the age of 69, his estate was valued at \$17 million, less than his philanthropic commitments. Within 25 years, the Fund realized its goal.

Robert Elkington Wood was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on June 13, 1879. He studied engineering at West Point, from which he graduated in 1900. In 1908, Wood married Mary Butler Hardwick, and the couple had five children. Wood served as a lieutenant of cavalry during the Philippine insurrection from 1900 until 1902. From 1905 through 1915, he worked on the Panama Canal as quartermaster and director of the Panama Railroad Co. Wood retired from the service in 1915, but saw active service again during the First World War. He became a brigadier general under Major General George W. Goethals, the quartermaster general, and received a Distinguished Service Medal.

In 1919, Wood became vice president of merchandising for Montgomery Ward. With the advent of automobile transportation, he urged the establishment of retail stores. Differences with the president of Montgomery Ward led Wood to offer his services to Sears, Roebuck and Company. In 1924, Julius Rosenwald hired Wood as vice president of Sears. Wood was largely responsible for the successful expansion of Sears through retail stores across the country. His role in the evolution of the firm is discussed below.

In 1928, Wood became president of the company, and in 1939 chairman of board. Under Wood's leadership, Sears stock increased 1,082 percent over 25 years.<sup>5</sup> Wood was interested not only in the prosperity of the firm, but in the welfare of its employees, noting that "Business must account for its stewardship not only on the balance sheet but also in matters of social responsibility."<sup>6</sup> Wood retired from the firm in 1954, and died on November 6, 1969.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>5</sup> Worthy, *Shaping an American Institution: Robert E. Wood and Sears, Roebuck*, page 37.

<sup>6</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 233.

Founding and Early Years (1892-1907)

On April 6, 1892, the firm that Richard Sears founded was incorporated as A.C. Roebuck, Inc.; Sears was still prohibited from selling watches under his own name by the agreement he had made when he moved to Iowa to work in banking several years earlier. In the new firm, Sears held 499 shares, Roebuck held 250 shares, and Sears' sister Eva held one share. Sears was president, Roebuck secretary-treasurer, and the three shareholders served as directors. On September 16, 1893, the three-year limit against Sears using his own name in the business ended, and the firm became Sears, Roebuck and Company.

The new firm occupied rented quarters in the Globe Building in Minneapolis.<sup>7</sup> In 1893, Richard Sears also opened a branch office and shipping depot in Chicago. The new company carried an expanded line of goods. Planning, merchandising, and advertising were carried out by Sears with assistance from Roebuck. Other employees in the firm included women clerks; occasionally a man was hired for a special project.<sup>8</sup> Sears' promotional efforts met with success, and net sales increased from \$276,980 in 1892, to \$388,464 in 1893, to \$393,323 in 1894.<sup>9</sup>

In 1894, Richard Sears was introduced to Julius Rosenwald by Rosenwald's brother-in-law, Aaron E. Nusbaum. Nusbaum had made \$150,000 through having the soft drinks concession at the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Nusbaum met Richard Sears when he offered the mail order entrepreneur a pneumatic tube system in which he was an investor.<sup>10</sup> Rosenwald's firm was already providing wholesale clothing to Sears for mail order sales. Sears valued his business at \$140,000; Rosenwald and brother-in-law each paid \$35,000 to become partners in the company.<sup>11</sup>

The firm was reincorporated under Illinois law on August 23, 1894, with Sears as president, Rosenwald as vice president, and Nusbaum as treasurer and general manager. Sears was primarily responsible for advertising and sales promotion, Rosenwald for merchandise line and administrative work, and Nusbaum for finances and some administration. Sears owned 800 shares of the company's stock, and Rosenwald and Nusbaum each owned 350. (By 1898, the three principals owned 500 shares each.)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Globe Building was an eight-story masonry office building in Minneapolis. *Hudson's Directory of 1893* listed the building at 16-18 South Fourth Street, on the present site of the Public Library. The Globe Building survived until demolition circa 1957.

<sup>8</sup> Boris Emmet and John C. Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), page 135.

<sup>9</sup> M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), page 219.

<sup>10</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 220. It does not appear from archival documentation that Sears purchased the pneumatic tube system offered by Nusbaum.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 219.

In January, 1895, Sears' Minneapolis and Chicago offices were consolidated in a five-story building at 171, 173, and 175 West Adams Street in Chicago. The firm had 80 employees, and sales in 1895 were \$745,595, nearly double that of the previous year. Despite the increasing sales, profits did not grow as rapidly, probably due to the great disorganization in receiving, handling, and shipping goods. Sears concentrated on increasing sales, at which he was very successful, but did not implement an organized system to keep up with growing sales. Employees were expected to work a great deal of overtime without extra pay. Working conditions were crowded and dirty. As a result, workers were apathetic, turnover was frequent, and many errors occurred in filling and sending orders. One historian has compared Sears and his workers in the early years of the business to a sorcerer and his apprentices.<sup>13</sup> The chaos and disorganization were too much for Alvah Roebuck, who sold his shares in the company to Sears for \$25,000 soon after the company moved to Chicago.<sup>14</sup>

By 1896, the growing firm needed more space, and moved to a building at corner of Fulton and Desplaines Streets, with Elmer Scott as general manager. However, even the new building was too small as orders continued to increase. Storage space was rented in various buildings in different parts of the city, making shipping and receiving increasingly difficult. The firm had four separate shipping departments: in the Monarch Building at Desplaines and Halsted; in the Bradley Building on Jefferson Street; and on the fourth and sixth floors of the main building at Fulton and Desplaines. The Bicycle Department was located at Fulton and Halsted; the Grocery Department on four floors and the basement of a building west of Desplaines on Fulton; and the Binder-twine Plant in the Bradley Building. Receiving incoming goods was a problem, since incoming freight had to remain on sidewalks if enough had not been shipped out to make room for the new goods.<sup>15</sup> Even with these difficulties, sales in 1896 were almost double those of the previous year.

Julius Rosenwald was determined to improve both the manner of business and the quality of merchandise offered by Sears, Roebuck and Company. Influenced by the success of Montgomery Ward and Company, Rosenwald encouraged the expansion of a range of merchandise carried by Sears. By 1896, the Sears catalogue carried general merchandise including clothing, wagons and buggies, harnesses, farm equipment, plumbing supplies, household furnishings, dishes, dry goods, watches, jewelry, firearms, sewing machines, bicycles, and musical instruments. Prices were guaranteed to be "below all others" and merchandise was guaranteed.

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence P. Bachmann, "Julius Rosenwald." *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Volume 66, page 92.

<sup>14</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 219.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from R.P. Moffott, July 19, 1918, to Julius Rosenwald. Moffott started work at Sears, Roebuck and Company on March 31, 1896.

Various employees developed systems to facilitate the mail order process. C.D. Palmer, who came to company in 1898 as bicycle correspondent and retired in 1928 as office manager, developed a system of form letters to respond to customer correspondence.

In 1897, the firm had 475 employees. By the following year, 700 were employed, and in 1899 the number of employees had more than doubled, with 1,720.<sup>16</sup> With the growth in number of employees, rules for behavior were developed in 1898 and were not substantially changed for many years. These rules emphasized discipline, timeliness, and attention to work. General manager Elmer Scott, who was acquainted with Jane Addams of Hull House, instituted early employee welfare efforts. In 1899, the Seroco Club was formed to improve department managers' understanding of their staffs and responsibilities. The annual publication, *Seroco Topics*, was initiated, and the club met to discuss employee relations and training.<sup>17</sup>

By 1900, Sears had surpassed Montgomery Ward and Company with more than \$10 million in sales, and by the following year 2,500 persons were working for the firm. The firm advertised widely, but the main selling tool was the catalogue written by Richard Sears. Sears emphasized a close rapport with customers, offering guarantees, low prices, return policy, and customer service. For many years, response letters to customers were even handwritten to provide a more personal response. Despite increasing sales, disagreements between Sears and Nusbaum led to Nusbaum's resignation on February 14, 1901. Sears and Rosenwald bought Nusbaum's interest in the firm for \$1,250,000. Sears remained president; Rosenwald became vice president and treasurer, and attorney Albert Loeb became secretary of the firm. Loeb, of the law firm of Loeb and Adler, had played an increasingly important role in the firm since his law office had handled reorganization of the company in 1894.

In 1902, the firm opened a New York buying office to execute orders from Chicago. This office was headed by Robert P. Sniffen, later a director of the firm.

The employee publication, *The Skylight*, first appeared in 1901. This publication announced employees club activities and meetings; most employee clubs were primarily social. *The Skylight* was at first published twice monthly, and by 1904 was published once each month. In May 1902, the Seroco Mutual Benefit Association was organized to provide employee insurance. Within four years, this organization had over 3,000 members.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, the firm initiated first aid and general health services for employees.

Other amenities for employees included free coffee served in the departments beginning in 1902. The company made arrangements with the Chicago Public Library to circulate books. Sears employees could purchase coal at wholesale prices. The Employees Savings Department, opened by January, 1903, offered a savings plan with five percent interest. As general manager, Scott eliminated night work and Sunday work in 1902, regarding those work hours as unproductive and bad for employees. Overtime work was discouraged, and no additional pay was offered. However, when overtime was sometimes required by special circumstances, employees could take time off in slower seasons. In general, the emphasis of personnel policy was on self-improvement and individual initiative. In 1904, Scott initiated a plan to provide a training school for employees.

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<sup>16</sup> Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 69.

<sup>17</sup> Emmet and Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, page 135.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, page 141.



By 1904, the company had outgrown its old quarters on Fulton and DesPlaines Streets. Its goods were distributed wherever warehouse space could be obtained in Chicago. The process for receiving and shipping goods was complicated and difficult. Shipments were transferred to and from the Sears offices and railheads, express companies, and the post office by horse-drawn wagons. Traffic stoppages occurred at the various rented buildings, with waiting in the street for loading and unloading of goods. By 1904, the express companies threatened not to take the firm's business because its operations were so chaotic.

Sears, Roebuck and Company under Julius Rosenwald (1908-1932)

While Richard Sears concentrated on bringing in more business, Julius Rosenwald wanted to bring order out of the chaos of the company's order handling and shipping procedures. Rosenwald's desire was realized through planning and construction of the Mail Order Plant on Chicago's West Side, as discussed below. The new, highly efficient system for purchasing, receiving, handling, and shipping merchandise allowed the already-successful firm to grow at an even faster rate. In 1905, the year in which part of the new plant was first occupied, sales reached \$37,879,422.<sup>19</sup>

Upon the advice of Rosenwald's friend Henry Goldman of Goldman, Sachs and Company, in New York, Sears, Roebuck and Company issued preferred stock on June 16, 1906. Sears and Rosenwald each received \$4,500,000 in cash for their stock. The preferred stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange immediately; common stock was listed by 1910. In 1906, the year in which the completed Chicago plant went into operation, the firm had 9,290 employees on site and sales were more than \$50,000,000.<sup>20</sup>

In the financial panic of 1907, Sears, Roebuck and Company's sales dropped by nearly \$10 million and profits by 37 percent. By 1908, the firm experienced financial difficulties due at least in part due to Sears' scheme of giving customers coupons which could be redeemed for expensive premiums, a program opposed by Rosenwald and others. In response to lower sales and profits, Sears wanted to increase advertising; Rosenwald objected. General manager Louis Asher and merchandise manager J. Fletcher Skinner, both of whom had been appointed by Sears, also opposed Sears' plan. The partners also disagreed over Sears' decision to open a Dallas branch. As a result of these differences, Sears resigned as president on November 21, 1908. He served as chairman of the board chair, and then as a director, until November 26, 1913. Sears eventually sold his stock in the company for \$10,000,000.

Following Sears's resignation in 1908, Rosenwald became president of the firm. Rosenwald based his leadership of the company on a philosophy of business: "Treat people fairly and honestly and generously and their response will be fair and honest and generous. Sell honest merchandise for less money and many people will buy. Sell for less by buying for less."<sup>21</sup> Rosenwald also supported lowering profits on individual sales while increasing aggregate profits through a larger number of sales.

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<sup>19</sup> Emmet and Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, page 130.

<sup>20</sup> Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 69.

<sup>21</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 225.

Rosenwald's leadership of Sears was not that of an autocrat. He encouraged department heads to pursue new ideas, and was described as taking "a fatherly interest in the welfare of the thousands of employes (*sic*)...."<sup>22</sup> He dined in the company dining rooms, where men and women had separate tables. Although he was not able to remove saloons from the vicinity of the plant, Rosenwald created a rule that no worker could enter one. A 1907 personnel manual entitled, *Sears, Roebuck and Company and Their Employees*, warned employees of "the evil of drink, the futility of smoking, the necessity of morality, and the virtue of diligence and thrift."<sup>23</sup> By that year, employee services included night school, restaurants, an in-house medical staff and hospital, discounts on purchases, and paid vacation time, among other benefits.

Rosenwald was successful. The branch office opened at Dallas was continued, and new branches were established at Seattle and Philadelphia. The firm continued to expand and improve its merchandise. A testing laboratory was opened to evaluate goods. When the firm could not purchase items that it wanted to sell, it began to manufacture them, including farm implements, pianos, and stoves. In 1910, sales reached \$40,000,000.<sup>24</sup>

Rosenwald made it a goal to raise the standards of business, including improvements in the accuracy of advertising, and a policy of "your money back if not satisfied." The business rapidly expanded, and extended lines of goods were carried. Agricultural prosperity also contributed to a rise in the buying power of farmers. The advent of the parcel post system in 1913 benefitted the mail order business by reducing shipping costs. Sears, Roebuck's sales increased to \$100,000,000 in 1914.

In 1916, Julius Rosenwald set up "The Savings and Profit Sharing Pension Fund of Sears, Roebuck and Co. Employes (*sic*)." Each year, an employee was permitted to contribute five percent of his earnings up to \$500. Sears, Roebuck contributed a fixed percentage of pre-tax net profits to the fund. Participation in the fund was voluntary; more than 90 percent of employees enrolled.<sup>25</sup>

By 1919, the Mail Order Plant had its own Medical Department with a doctor in charge, eight assistant doctors, and 13 nurses who assisted at the plant and provided home visits. The department also had its own clerical staff, and an 18-room hospital on the ninth floor of the Merchandise Building. The Medical Department's work was organized into five areas: medical supervision before and after employment, surgical supervision, dental supervision, sanitary (educational) supervision, and medical welfare work.

By 1919, the principal catalogue was 1,200 pages in length. Sears was manufacturing many of the goods sold, and operated ten shoe factories, a stove factory, and factories for pianos, wall paper, paint, cameras, buggies, wagons, and agricultural machinery, among other

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<sup>22</sup> Redmond, *Financial Giants of America*, page 100.

<sup>23</sup> Emmet and Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, page 145.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph J. Christian, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Sears, Roebuck and Company Complex, History section.

<sup>25</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 233.

goods. In that year, sales reached \$234,242,337, with profits of more than \$18,000,000, and 40 percent of the stock was divided.<sup>26</sup>

By the early 1920s, a number of factors began to conspire against the company's success. In the financial panic of that year, farm prices also began to fall, resulting in lower buying power of farmers. In the Spring of that year, a buyers' strike also occurred. Small mail order houses failed. In 1920, Sears, Roebuck and Company's sales rose to more than \$245,000,000, but profits fell to about \$11,700,000.<sup>27</sup> From a high in 1919, sales fell to \$254,595,000 in 1920, and to \$178,000,000 in 1921, approximately the same figure as 1917. The firm reduced the number of employees from more than 21,000 in 1920 to just over 18,000 by 1921, but business still suffered. Goods were overstocked and could not be sold. Finally, Rosenwald pledged \$20,000,000 of his own fortune to the company; this gesture was noted on the front page of the *New York Times*. Business improved and debts were paid. By 1922, Sears, Roebuck and Company had recovered its financial status.

After the panic of 1920, Rosenwald appointed his brother-in-law Max Adler as head of merchandising. The overstock was liquidated and buying practices controlled. As the business again expanded rapidly, a larger assortment of goods was carried. The firm established more factories, with approximately 20,000 employees overall.<sup>28</sup> The variety and quality of merchandise available began to increase. For example, Sears began to carry shoes made in its own factory. Sears, Roebuck and Company also offered *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and later the *American People's Encyclopedia*. There was also a Sears Readers Club, echoing the library services provided in early years to employees.

In 1923, the Sears-Roebuck Agricultural Foundation was created, with the motto: "to help you farm better, sell better and live better." The foundation sponsored educational programs, farm assistance programs, broadcasts, and films, and later expanded to include 4-H Club activities, scholarships, and other types of community service.<sup>29</sup> Sears' Farm Service Division was directed by a Mail Order Farm Advisor.

In 1924, Rosenwald selected Charles M. Kittle, executive vice president of the Illinois Central Railroad, as the new president of the company. Rosenwald also brought in General Robert E. Wood, formerly vice president of merchandising for Montgomery Ward and Company, as vice president of Sears, Roebuck. Had Rosenwald known of Wood's availability first, he might have selected Wood in place of Kittle, given Wood's experience in merchandising for another major mail order firm.

During the 1920s, mail order firms faced difficulties as the population shifted from the rural setting to urban centers. The advent of automobiles made it possible for customers to travel

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, page 226.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants, Part VII," *The Architectural Record*, Volume 45, Number 6, May, 1919, page 512.

<sup>29</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 233.

to stores, and new chain stores provided competition. The solution for mail order companies was to establish retail stores.

In 1925, under the direction of Wood and Kittle, Sears, Roebuck and Company entered the retail store business. The first Sears retail store opened in the Chicago mail order plant on February 2, 1925. In that year, 95.5 percent of the company's more than \$258,000,000 in sales came from mail order, while 4.5 percent came from retail. The retail portion of sales grew steadily, and after 1931 accounted for more than half of all sales.<sup>30</sup>

Other Sears retail stores were opened in outlying areas to take advantage of lower rentals while providing ready access by automobiles. By this plan, these stores anticipated modern shopping centers.<sup>31</sup> Sears retail stores varied from carrying a full line of merchandise to concentrating on furnishings and appliances, or farm equipment and catalogue sales, depending upon the location of the store.

In 1928, Kittle died unexpectedly at age 46 after only three years with the firm. Rosenwald selected Robert Wood as president; Doering and Adler resigned. However, Rosenwald's choice was justified by the increasing growth and prosperity of the firm under Wood's direction.

A description of the company written in the mid-1920s<sup>32</sup> emphasized the prosperous, bustling nature of the business as well as the importance of the Mail Order Plant. At that time, more than 50,000,000 catalogues were sent out annually; approximately 130,000 orders reached the four stores each day. In addition to the various merchandise departments, the Mail Order Plant featured a laboratory for testing goods; an examining and pressing room for clothing; showrooms for jewelry, shoes, pianos, phonographs, rugs, furniture, and plumbing supplies; and a Grocery Department with a wide variety of foodstuffs.

Radio Station WLS, (named after the "World's Largest Store"), had its studio in the Tower of the Merchandise Building. This 500 watt station, operating on 345 meter wave length, also had a station at the Hotel Sherman in Chicago. In keeping with Sears' role in the lives of farm families, WLS broadcast agricultural talks, national debates on farm issues, and educational programs.

By the late 1920s, Sears had offices in New York, Berlin, and London, as well as across the United States. With Theodore V. Houser, who came from Montgomery Wards to Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1928, Robert Wood initiated Sears' manufacture and sales of automobile tires. After a competition to select a name, the new brand was called "Allstate." This name was also applied to automobile supplies, accessories, and in 1931, to auto insurance concern and later its companion firm, Allstate Fire Insurance. Another success

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<sup>30</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 227.

<sup>31</sup> Ralph J. Christian, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Sears, Roebuck and Company Complex, History section.

<sup>32</sup> *A Visit to Sears, Roebuck & Co.: Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, Seattle* (Chicago, Illinois: Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1924).

was the Coldspot electric refrigerator, for which the final design was prepared by renowned industrial designer Raymond Loewy.

### The Depression Years and World War II

On July 6, 1931, Sears entered banking with the creation of the Sears-Community State Bank. In the same year, a central personnel department development was established at the Chicago plant. One year later, Julius Rosenwald died; he was succeeded as chairman of the board by his son Lessing.<sup>33</sup>

As more retail stores were added, Sears, Roebuck and Company was able to prosper through the Depression of the 1930s. Despite fluctuations, annual sales by 1937 were \$537,242,400.<sup>34</sup> By 1938, the Mail Order Plant employed approximately 50,000 persons, although technological improvements allowed fewer men to handle the same number of orders.

During the Depression years, additional amenities were developed for employee welfare. The monthly picture newsletter, the *News-Graphic*, began publication in 1936. And in 1939, Sears, Roebuck and Company instituted an independent research organization for employee welfare.

During World War II, many employees went into the armed services and many factories converted to war work, but the war only slowed the growth of the firm slightly. The Sears company newsletter featured articles on the activities of employees in the service, and the Mail Order Plant's garden won a Victory Garden competition sponsored by the *Chicago Sun*.<sup>35</sup> The expansion of the network of retail stores continued to bring added prosperity. In 1942, Sears opened a retail store in Havana, Cuba, beginning an expansion of its retail network into Latin America and South America.

By the mid-1940s, the Mail Order Plant had 9,500 workers at the site and issued 15 million catalogues annually. The plant had its own post office, telephone system, hospital, service station, and park. The plant's fire department had 21 volunteer employee fire companies. Amenities for employees at the plant included music played for half hour periods twice in morning and twice in the afternoon. Sears employees could order catalogue items to be delivered to their desks; 3,000 items were ordered in this manner each day.<sup>36</sup>

By 1947, sales had reached \$3,000,000,000 per year. Of every \$100 spent in the United States for general merchandise in that year, \$5 went to Sears, Roebuck and Company.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 227.

<sup>34</sup> Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 69.

<sup>35</sup> "Sears Garden Wins with Victory Crop," *Sears News Graphic*, Volume II, Number 9, October 21, 1943, pages 1 and 9.

<sup>36</sup> "A City in a Store," *Popular Mechanics*, May, 1943, pages 40-41, ff.

<sup>37</sup> Mahoney, *The Great Merchants*, page 216.

### Post-World War II Years

Beginning in 1952, Sears entered business in Canada as a partner of the firm Robert Simpson Company, Ltd. The new firm was called Simpson-Sears Limited, and provided both mail and retail sales. In 1954, Theodore V. Houser became chairman of the board.

By 1964, Sears had surpassed the A&P (Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co., Inc.) grocery chain as the world's largest retailers. By 1973, Sears, Roebuck and Company had 837 retail stores, 12 catalogue order plants, and 2,647 catalogue and telephone sales offices. Sales were more than \$11 billion per year, with catalogue sales only 22 percent of that total.<sup>38</sup>

The peak of operations at the Sears, Roebuck, and Company Mail Order Plant occurred in the late 1960s or early 1970s. In 1974, Sears headquarters moved its offices to the 100-story Sears Tower at 233 South Wacker Drive in downtown Chicago. The decline in catalogue sales in comparison to retail sales, the opening of other Sears facilities across the country by mid-century, and the relocation of the company's headquarters all contributed to a lessening of importance of the Mail Order Plant. In 1987, the Merchandise Building closed, and the mail order portion of the business at the Chicago Plant ended.

### The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant

#### Planning and Design

In a 1904 letter describing the proposed construction with regard to insurance requirements, Richard Sears wrote:

We have procured a piece of property about three miles directly west of our City Hall (Center of city). The property is 537 feet wide and one-half a mile long,...in one of the best residence districts of our city....We are planning to erect a building of mill construction, the main part of the building covering an area of about 300 to 400 feet, with a large court in the center, and adjoining each building will be two long two-story buildings....Our power plant will be in a separate building, made fire-proof....We will install such reservoirs for water and such facilities for conveying water, such watch service, independent fire fighting organization, and equipment as will give us the greatest protection....These buildings when completed will be occupied by us in the handling and shipping of all kinds of merchandise, and the value of the goods that will be carried in these buildings will at times be in excess of \$5,000,000.00.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ralph J. Christian, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Sears, Roebuck and Company Complex, History section.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Richard Sears to Mr. Jno. A. Freeman, President of the Mutual Insurance Co. in Providence, Rhode Island, November 30(?), 1904. Sears noted that the site proposed for new construction was three miles west of the city center; in fact, it is five miles west of the center of downtown.

The site of the new Sears Mail Order Plant was a tract of land about five miles west of the city center, two blocks wide and half a mile long, comprising 41.6 acres in all. The location was selected for its ready access to transportation, along railroad lines which connected more than 30 railroads with Chicago. It was also adjacent to residential neighborhoods where the employees would live. Space was available for expansion and for outdoor amenities. The architect summarized the advantages of the site:

The erection of this great plant furnished an opportunity of designing and planning a plant specially adapted to this particular business, on vacant ground with plenty of room and no obstacles to interfere with whatever arrangement and design seemed best for the purpose.<sup>40</sup>

The requirements for the new plant included a merchandise building where goods could be stored and shipped; an administration building; a printing plant; and various amenities including an outdoor recreation area. The architects and client spent a year in preliminary study and site selection. Approval was obtained from the city to close a street to provide a continuous site, 1,250 feet (381 meters) long by 340 feet (104 meters) wide, for the new Merchandise Building.

Julius Rosenwald personally negotiated with the architects and contractors for the new plant. He selected Nimmons and Fellows as the architects; the firm had designed his home at 4901 Ellis Avenue in Chicago in 1903, and had also designed a house for Richard Sears in Grayslake, Illinois.

In an article explaining the process of design for the Mail Order Plant, the architects noted that in order to design the site and buildings for greatest economy, efficiency, and safety, the buildings were organized into three groups based on three divisions of business: advertising and printing; administration; and merchandise storage, handling, and shipping.<sup>41</sup> Nimmons felt that the distinct processes of work should be organized in separate rooms or separate buildings. The flow of production should follow a direct path, without obstacles. The processes and work pattern would determine the design.

In 1919, Nimmons wrote:

Mistakes in the management or operation of a plant can usually be corrected without material disturbance to the business, but mistakes in the plan, arrangement, or design of the buildings require, as a rule, a "major operation," in order to put the plant in a healthy, growing and efficient state of development. The plan and design of the buildings fix to a certain extent the character of the future business, just as certainly as the mould determines the casting when the metal is poured. The plan and design for

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<sup>40</sup> Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants, Part VII," page 508.

<sup>41</sup> [George C.] Nimmons and [William K.] Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," *The Architectural Record*, Volume XIX, Number 6, June, 1906, page 3.

each building should therefore be made perfect before beginning its construction.<sup>42</sup>

The site design and aesthetics of the architecture were also of special interest. The architects noted that:

Sears, Roebuck & Company are as much interested as is anyone in maintaining the character of the neighborhood. It will ultimately become the place of residence of their employees, and they are keenly alive to the effect of pleasant surroundings upon the moral and physical well-being of the people who work for them.<sup>43</sup>

The exterior brickwork of the buildings was selected to be a rich, dark red brick with terra cotta trim, and the design was said to have been inspired by the architecture of Tuscany. The lunettes and frieze of Merchandise Building tower, the "book mark" ornament of the Printing Building, and the medallions of the Power Plant were glazed white and blue terra cotta. The frieze on the Administration Building was reportedly inspired by the marble inlay of San Miniato at Florence.

The park-like treatment of the site, with its landscape park, "will add wonders to the attractiveness of the whole place and not infrequently exert an invaluable influence on the morale of the entire working force."<sup>44</sup>

#### Construction

When plans for the new plant were published in trade papers, Louis J. Horowitz of the Thompson-Starrett Company of New York traveled to Chicago to offer the firm's services. Horowitz offered a bid of \$250,000 for construction. He offered to sign a contract for a construction fee of only \$1; if Rosenwald was not satisfied with completed work, Sears, Roebuck and Company would only need to pay the cost of materials plus \$1. An agreement was finally drawn up for a fee of \$40,000, and the contract was signed on December 22, 1904.<sup>45</sup>

Ground was broken on January 24, 1905. Approximately 7,000 men worked on construction of the new plant. Each day 60 freight car loads of building materials were used. The contractor later reported that 23,000,000 bricks were used in construction. Several of the building were of mill construction. The order for yellow pine timber placed on January 11, 1905, was reportedly the largest in history of the trade, requiring 13,545,576 board feet of

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<sup>42</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants: Part III - Plans and Designs," *The Architectural Record*, January 1919, page 27.

<sup>43</sup> Nimmons and Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," page 411.

<sup>44</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants, Part IV," page 168.

<sup>45</sup> Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 70.



lumber.<sup>46</sup> The terra cotta for the buildings was fabricated by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Co., which had offices at 1000 Clybourn Avenue in Chicago in 1905.

The Merchandise Building was completed by October, 1905. The entire plant was turned over to Sears, Roebuck on January 15, 1906, and on January 22, 1906, the company moved its operations to the new facility. The move from downtown Chicago to the new plant was made in approximately 200 wagons over a period of about one and one-half weeks. Merchandise was moved across the city, even as shipping continued uninterrupted at the offices. When the wagons arrived at the new plant, the adjacent streets were unpaved and few sidewalks had been constructed, but the Merchandise Building was ready for operations.<sup>47</sup>

When construction was completed, Rosenwald issued three checks, the first for the agreed sum of \$40,000, an additional fee of \$210,000 to cover actual costs, and a bonus of \$50,000 for the excellence of the work. The cost of construction was \$4,282,000; including equipment, the cost of construction of the new plant was \$5,600,000.<sup>48</sup>

Buildings completed in the original, 1905-1906 construction program included the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, the Power House, the Printing and Advertising Building, and the Paint Factory. The adjacent park was developed soon after the buildings.

#### The Architects, Engineers, and Builders

The firm of Nimmons and Fellows was responsible for the design of the original buildings of the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant in Chicago, including the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, the Printing and Advertising Building, the Power House, and the Paint Factory.

**George Croll Nimmons, FAIA.** George Croll Nimmons was born in Wooster, Ohio, in 1867 and educated at the local academy. After graduating, he studied architecture in Europe. Nimmons returned to the United States and in 1885 entered the office of Burnham & Root in Chicago as a draftsman. In 1897, he formed a partnership with William K. Fellows, as described below. In 1898, Nimmons married Justine V. Wheeler, and the couple had three children. The partnership of Nimmons and Fellows lasted until 1910. From 1910 until 1917, Nimmons practiced privately as principal of George C. Nimmons & Co., and from 1920 until 1933 as principal of Nimmons & Co. His work in this period in Chicago included the Franklin Building (1912), the C.P. Kimball & Co. Building, the Reid, Murdoch & Co. Building (1913), and the Adams Schaaf Building (1916), and the Union Special Machines Company (1918). During the 1920s, his work in Chicago included the Kelley Building (1921) and the American Furniture Mart (1923, 1926). From 1933, Nimmons was senior partner in

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<sup>46</sup> Theodore Starrett, "The Making of a Great Mercantile Plant," *The Architectural Record*, Volume XIX, Number 4, April, 1906, page 272.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from R.P. Moffott to Julius Rosenwald, July 19, 1918.

<sup>48</sup> Letter of August 2, 1939, to A.C. Roebuck at Sears from G.C. Nimmons at Nimmons, Carr & Wright. (See also Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 74.)

the firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright, with George W. Carr and Clark C. Wright, as described below. Nimmons retired in 1945, and died on June 17, 1947.<sup>49</sup>

During and after his tenure with Nimmons and Fellows, Nimmons published extensively, including articles on the design of several of the Sears, Roebuck buildings across the country. He was the author of a series of articles on "Modern Industrial Plants" in *The Architectural Record* in 1918 and 1919.<sup>50</sup> Nimmons also wrote essays on the future of concrete, and an introduction to a college textbook entitled "The Significance of the Fine Arts."<sup>51</sup>

**William Kinne Fellows, FAIA.** William K. Fellows was born on September 3, 1870, in Winona, Minnesota, where he received his early education. Fellows studied at the Columbia University School of Mines and Architecture, and trained in architectural offices in New York City. He also studied for 18 months in Europe on a traveling fellowship. Fellows returned to the United States, where he settled in Chicago and established a firm with George C. Nimmons in which he practiced from 1897 until 1910, as described below. In 1898, Fellows married Elizabeth Steele. From 1911 until 1925, Fellows practiced with John L. Hamilton and Dwight Perkins in the firm Hamilton, Fellows & Perkins. This firm specialized in school architecture, and designed high schools at Bay City, Michigan (1918); Manitowoc, Wisconsin (1922); and Evanston, Illinois. Fellows also designed several buildings for University of Nanking in China. After 1925 and until retirement, Fellows practiced privately. He died on August 8, 1948.<sup>52</sup>

The firm Nimmons and Fellows was established in 1897 and continued until 1910. Best known for large commercial structures, one of the firm's first major commissions of this type was the Sears & Roebuck plant on the West Side of Chicago. One of their most successful works, this work led to the firm's later receiving commissions to design buildings for Sears, Roebuck in several Midwestern cities in the early twentieth century.

Among the other major works by the firm in Chicago are the Bailey Building (south portion, 1898); the Leshner Building (1902), the Stratford Building (1907), the Arthur Dixon Building (1908), and the Railway Terminal Building (1909), as well as buildings for Sears, Roebuck

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<sup>49</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), page 442.

<sup>50</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants," Part I, *The Architectural Record*, Volume 44, Number 5, November, 1918, pages 414-421; Part II, December 1918, page 531-550; Part III, January 1919, pages 27-44; Part IV, February 1919, pages 148-168; Part V, March 1919, pages 262-282; Part VIa, April 1919, pages 343-355; Part VIb, May 1919, pages 450-470; and Part VII, June 1919, pages 506-525. Part VII deals specifically with the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant in Chicago.

<sup>51</sup> George C. Nimmons, Introduction to *The Significance of the Fine Arts* (Committee on Education of the American Institute of Architects and the Committee on Architecture and Art of the Association of American Colleges, published by the Marshall James Company, 1923).

<sup>52</sup> Henry F. Withey, and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*, page 206.

and Company in Seattle, Washington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Kansas City, Missouri, among other locations. The firm also designed a residence for R.W. Sears residence in Grayslake, Illinois, in 1906,<sup>53</sup> and a residence for Julius Rosenwald in Chicago in 1903.<sup>54</sup>

After 1910, George C. Nimmons practiced as principal of George C. Nimmons & Co. (1911-1917) and Nimmons & Co. (1917-1928). He continued to design for the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant. Buildings of this period include the additions to the Merchandise Building Annexes.

The firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright, established in 1928, was the successor firm to Nimmons and Fellows, George C. Nimmons & Co., and Nimmons & Co. Nimmons, Carr & Wright was responsible for later construction at the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, including the Allstate Building (1949). Nimmons, Carr & Wright also designed buildings for Sears, Roebuck and Company at other locations, including the Sears, Roebuck and Company Building at Elliott and Lake Streets in St. Paul (1927), which is still extant.

George Wallace Carr was born in 1879 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He studied design and engineering at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Armour Institute of Technology. After three years of travel and study abroad, Carr joined the firm of Pond & Pond in 1899. In 1914, Carr became associated with the firm of George C. Nimmons & Co., later Nimmons, Carr & Wright. Carr retired from the firm in 1949. He resided in Highland Park, Illinois, and died in 1958.<sup>55</sup>

Clark Chittenden Wright, AIA, was born on July 3, 1880, in Libertyville, Illinois, and educated at Beloit College in Wisconsin. Like George Carr, he studied architecture and engineering at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. In 1915, Wright began his career as a draftsman in the office of George C. Nimmons in Chicago. By 1933, he became a partner in the firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright. Wright was in charge of structural work on many large buildings including the Sears, Roebuck and Company buildings in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities; the Allstate Building at the Sears Mail Order Plant in Chicago; the Chicago Beach Hotel in Chicago; and the Portland Cement Company Research Laboratories in Skokie, Illinois.<sup>56</sup> Wright died on October 12, 1948.

After Nimmons' death in 1947, the firm continued as Carr and Wright, Inc., Architects-Engineers.

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<sup>53</sup> Richard W. Sears Residence, Grayslake, Illinois, *Inland Architect and News Record*, Volume 47, Number 6, July, 1906.

<sup>54</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), pages 55-56.

<sup>55</sup> Obituary of George Wallace Carr, *The Chicago Tribune*, March 26, 1958.

<sup>56</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*, page 672.

**Dunlap & Esgar, Inc.** The firm was responsible for design of parking garages at the Mail Order Plant.

**R. (Robert) Rea Esgar** was born on August 24, 1905, in Bozeman, Montana. He was educated at Gallatin Co. High School in Bozeman, and attended Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa, for one year. Esgar received a B.S. in Architecture from Montana State College at Bozeman in 1927, and a M. Arch. degree from Harvard University in 1930. After working as a draftsman for the firm of Fred E. Wilson in Bozeman during college, he worked for Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott in Boston from 1929-1940 as a draftsman, and from 1944-1946 as an architect. Esgar also worked as architect and chief architect for Chas. T. Main, Inc., in Boston, from 1940-1944. Beginning in 1946, he was a principal with Nimmons, Carr & Wright (Carr and Wright, Inc.) in Chicago. During that time, Carr and Wright had offices at 333 North Michigan Avenue.

Projects with which Esgar was involved while with Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott included Logan International Airport in Boston; the Plant Pathology Building at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research at Princeton, New Jersey, New York Hospital and Cornell Medical Center in New York City; Lowell House, Elliot House, the Chapel, and various buildings at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the George Robert White Memorial Building for Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. While working at Chas. T. Main, Inc., during World War II, he served as Chief Architect for the Duck River Plant for the Chemical Warfare Service, constructed in Columbia, Tennessee; 30 residences at the Holston Ordnance Works at Kingsport, Tennessee; and various buildings at Camp McCain, Grenada, Mississippi. Esgar died on December 12, 1966.

**Leonard Eugene Dunlap** was born on April 15, 1893, in Savoy, Illinois. He was educated at Urbana High School, and graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign in 1917. Dunlap worked as a draftsman in Chicago for the Illinois Central Railroad from 1917 to 1919; for the Sinclair Oil Company Engineering Department in 1919; and for George C. Nimmons & Co. (Nimmons & Co.) from 1919 to 1921. From 1921 to 1927, he was in charge of the drafting department for the Kalman Steel Company, Distribution Engineering Department, in Chicago. In 1927, he rejoined the firm of Nimmons & Co. (Nimmons, Carr & Wright), where he listed his position as "in responsible charge of work." Dunlap remained associated with the firm after 1947, when it was reorganized as Carr and Wright, Inc.. Dunlap died in 1976.

Although research in local archives did not provide any definite evidence that Dunlap and Esgar was a successor firm to Nimmons, Carr & Wright, and Carr and Wright, Inc., it is likely that the connection existed because both Dunlap and Esgar held positions of responsibility with the previously-named firms by the late 1940s. It is of interest that from 1905, with the design of the original Mail Order Plant by Nimmons and Fellows, through the 1960s, with the design of several parking garages at the Mail Order Plant by Dunlap and Esgar, Sears, Roebuck and Company appears to have employed a single architectural firm and its successors.

Consulting engineering services for the Mail Order Plant were provided by the firm of **Adams and Schwab** of Baltimore, with the work continued by Martin C. Schwab, principal of the firm, after he moved to Chicago in 1905. Adams and Schwab provided the design for the elaborate conveyance systems of the Merchandise Building, and mechanical systems for the Power House and other buildings at the Mail Order Plant.

**Martin Constan Schwab** was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1880, and attended the local Polytechnic Institute. He graduated in engineering from Johns Hopkins University in 1896. In 1904, Schwab married Besse Wiesel and the couple had two daughters. In addition to his engineering work, Schwab was also nationally known as a collector of Chinese, Egyptian, and Persian art objects.

As a consulting engineer, Schwab assisted in the electrification of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1896. He was later appointed consulting engineer for the Maryland Electric Co., and was active in the rebuilding of Baltimore after the Fire of 1904. He served as consulting engineer for the Soldier's Home in Washington, D.C., and for buildings in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, while a principal in the firm of Adams and Schwab.

In 1905, Schwab moved to Chicago and established the firm of Martin C. Schwab. He served as consulting engineer for the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, where his work included the design of extensive conveyance systems for the Merchandise Building. To Schwab on this project are attributed the development of the first high speed and horizontal assembly lines, and the first use of air conditioning in an administration building with sealed windows.<sup>57</sup> He also participated in the design of the WLS Broadcasting Station at the Merchandise Building.

Schwab served as consulting engineer for the electrification of drainage canals in Chicago and for the Illinois State Board of Administration (1913). He was involved in construction of the Bell Building, Mallers Building, Michigan Square Building, Adler Planetarium, Harris Trust & Savings Building, Corn Exchange National Bank, Hotel Sherman, Morrison Hotel, Mandel Brothers Building, Rothschild's Store, Lytton Stores, 30 North Michigan Avenue, 333 North Michigan Avenue, and various Yellow Cab Bus properties in Chicago; the General American Tank Car Corporation in East Chicago, Indiana; Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri; and the Baumberger Department Store in Newark, New Jersey. He also served as consulting engineer for the Julia Lathrop Government Housing Project in Chicago.<sup>58</sup> Schwab held patents for various devices developed for building construction. He was involved with construction of buildings in 150 cities in 43 states, and was active in various charitable organizations and clubs. Schwab died on January 2, 1947.

The firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland provided civil engineering services for the buildings of the original Mail Order Plant.

**Edward Clapp Shankland** was born on August 2, 1854, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was educated at public schools in Dubuque, Iowa, and studied civil engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, from which he graduated in 1878. (Edward Shankland received an honorary M.A. from Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, Iowa, in 1904.) In 1881, Edward Shankland married Harriet Graham; the couple had two children. From 1878 until 1883, Edward Shankland worked for the United States government on improvements to the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. From 1883 until 1889, he was

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<sup>57</sup> Obituary of Martin C. Schwab, *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 1947. This notice included a general description of Schwab's work; however, references to the names and locations of specific projects mentioned were not provided.

<sup>58</sup> *Who Was Who in America*, Volume 2.

engaged in structural work on bridges at Canton, Ohio. From 1889, he worked primarily in the design of steel structural systems for buildings, serving as an engineer for the firm of Burnham & Root (D.H. Burnham & Co.) until 1894. During the years 1891 through 1893, Edward Shankland was engineer of construction and chief engineer of the works for the World's Columbian Exposition. In 1898, he founded the firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland, Civil Engineers, with his brother, as discussed below. The firm specialized in designing steel structural systems for buildings. In 1896, Edward Shankland received the Telford gold medal and Telford premium from the Institute of Civil Engineers for his paper on steel skeleton construction in Chicago.

**Ralph Martin Shankland** was born on September 8, 1863, in Dubuque, Iowa. He studied civil engineering at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1888. In 1890, Ralph Shankland moved to Chicago, where he was employed in the engineering department of Burnham & Root (D.H. Burnham & Co.) until September, 1898. In 1894, Ralph Shankland married Justine M. McNeil, and the couple had one son. Beginning in 1898, he practiced civil engineering with his brother in the firm, E.C. and R.M. Shankland.

The firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland was very well known for its work in Chicago and elsewhere. In addition to the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, the firm served as structural engineers for the Coliseum Building, LaSalle Street Station, an addition to the Fisher Building, and the Corn Exchange National Bank in Chicago, on which Martin Schwab had also worked; the Tennessee Trust Building in Memphis; the Union Bank Building in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and a palace for the Crown Prince of Japan in Tokyo.

**Thompson Starrett Company.** The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant was constructed by the Thompson Starrett Company of New York. Theodore Starrett (1864 - 1917), founder of the company, lived in Prospect Plain, New York. He came from a literary family; his mother was editor of a woman's magazine. However, with his brothers Paul and William, Theodore Starrett was always involved in building construction. In his youth, he worked in the offices of Burnham and Root, as had George C. Nimmons and Edward and Ralph Shankland. His work as a contractor included the erection of many large structures in Chicago, New York, and Toronto.<sup>59</sup> Starrett published various articles about his work, including an article about construction of the Sears Mail Order Complex in *The Architectural Record* in 1906.

In addition to the Sears complex, work of the firm in Chicago included the Tribune Tower (1923 and 1925), and the Bismarck Hotel (1926), the Palmolive Building (1929).

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<sup>59</sup> Obituary of Theodore Starrett. *The Western Architect*, Volume 26, Number 5, November, 1917.

### Architectural Information

The site of the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant is on the west side of Chicago, approximately five miles west of the city center. The site is bounded by Lexington Street on the north, Grenshaw Street on the south, Kedzie Avenue on the east, and Independence Boulevard on the west. Generally, Arthington Street and Homan Avenue form the key access streets for the site.

There are seven extant buildings at the Mail Order Plant: the Merchandise Building (including Annexes, Grocery Building, and Box Factory), Administration Building, the Printing and Advertising Building, the Power House, the Paint Factory and Wall Paper Mill, the YMCA Building, and the Allstate Building.

The architectural character of all of the buildings is similar, with the exception of the Allstate Building. The six older buildings are red brick with terra cotta trim. All are approximately four to nine stories in height, with the exception of the Tower of the Merchandise Building which is 14 stories. The Allstate Building is a ten-story building designed in a modern utilitarian style; however, its exterior brick facades and simple fenestration relate well to the facades of the older buildings.

In general, the buildings of the Mail Order Plant are in good condition and well maintained. Masonry, roofing, and drainage systems are generally in good condition. In those buildings not currently in use, the windows at the lower floors have been boarded over.

At this writing, the Merchandise Building is scheduled to be demolished in 1994 to provide space for a new residential development. Portions of the building are only in fair condition, with localized deterioration of exterior masonry, roofing, and interior finishes from water penetration. A localized structural failure of a timber roof beam has occurred at the ninth floor, Section D, due to rotting of the wood from water penetration. The bridge leading from the west elevation of the Grocery Building to the Property Building (demolished) was removed, and the area of masonry that opened to the bridge at the Grocery Building is deteriorated.

### Original Phase of Construction (1905-1910)

Prior to construction of the Mail Order Plant, the area where the complex was to be built was almost completely undeveloped.<sup>60</sup> Only about one-half dozen structures existed in the area bounded by Lexington Street, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks, Central Park Avenue, and Kedzie Avenue. South of the railroad tracks, there was sparse residential development. On either side of each block, about six, one or two-story frame or masonry dwellings had been constructed, thus only about one-third of the lots plotted had been built upon by that date. A few industrial and commercial structures existed in the area during the 1890s, including a blacksmith shop and the Roberts Ironworks, located near the northeast corner of the St. Louis Avenue and Fillmore Street.

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<sup>60</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance map, vicinity of Arthington Street and Homan Avenue, 1896.

The Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad, an electric railway, extended west from the city center between Harrison and Fluornoy Streets by the 1890s. A station was located at the intersection of this rail line with St. Louis Avenue.

When the Mail Order Plant opened in 1906, the buildings of the original phase of development included the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, the Printing and Advertising Building, the Power House, and the Paint Factory. With the exception of the Power House, all of these buildings were substantially enlarged by the construction of additions over the next decade.

In 1907, the Garden and Pergola were completed across from the Administration Building. In the same year, the Shop and Old Garage were added to complex. During the following year, the Men's Field House and Women's Field House were constructed. In 1909, the Printing Building Annex was constructed as an addition to the Printing and Advertising Building. In 1910, the YMCA Building was completed, and the Merchandise Building was expanded through construction of additional floors at the Annexes.

These buildings are described below.

#### **Merchandise Building (1905-1906)**

The Merchandise Building is located at 924 South Homan Avenue, on a site bounded by Arthington Street on the north, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad tracks on the south, Homan Avenue on the east, and Central Park Avenue on the west. The shape of the building is an elongated "U." The overall dimensions of the east portion of the building are 450 feet (137 meters) by 312 feet (95 meters), with the central shipping court measuring 230 feet (70 meters) by 81 feet (25 meters). The tower was 50 feet (15 meters) square in plan. Annex A, the south annex, is 706 feet (215 meters) by 115 feet (35 meters) in plan. Annex B, the north annex, is 462 feet (141 meters) by 115 feet (35 meters) in plan. At the west end of Annex B, the Grocery Building is 327 feet (100 meters) by 130 feet (40 meters) in plan, and the Box Factory is 235 feet (72 meters) by 85 feet (26 meters) in plan. The front facade of the building faces east.

As constructed in 1905, the Merchandise Building consisted of a nine-story building surrounding a central court, with each of the Annexes three stories in height above a basement. The east portion of the building included the basement through ninth floors of Sections A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I. The Annexes, as originally constructed, included the basement through third floors of Annex A, Sections J, K, L, M, N, and O, and Annex B, Sections P, Q, R, and S. Between the two annexes, the train shed extended 60 feet (18 meters) in width and more than 400 feet (122 meters) in length.

The Tower, which was 50 feet (15 meters) square in plan and 225 feet (69 meters) tall, was of fireproof masonry construction. The Tower accommodated tanks that held 200,000 gallons of water for the sprinkler fire suppression system in tanks. Water mains were located in tunnels under the buildings. The top story of the Tower was used as an observation area and rest room for visitors.

In 1910, the Merchandise Building Annexes were expanded by construction of fourth through ninth floors in Annex A, Sections J and K, and Annex B, Sections P and Q. In 1912, the two-story Box Factory was constructed adjacent to the south facade at the west end



of Annex B. Also in 1912, the Grocery Building was constructed at the west end of Annex B, between the existing Annex and the Box Building as Sections 11 and 12 of Annex. The Grocery Building consisted of a basement and six floors. Between 1913 and 1916, the Merchandise Building Annexes were further expanded by the addition of fourth to ninth floors in Annex B, Sections R and S. In 1917, fourth to ninth floors were added to Annex A, Sections L, M, and N, and O.

The exterior facades are red brick with simple terra cotta trim. Regular rows of large windows provide a maximum of natural light to the work spaces within. The central Shipping Court was skylighted. The Tower at the east end of the building provided a visual landmark for the entire complex. The top of the tower was ornamented with blue and white terra cotta surrounding arched openings on each facade. The main entrance to the building is at the base of the Tower on the east facade. Secondary entrances are located along the north, south, and west facades. Loading docks are located along the south half of the east facade, and at intervals along the north and south facades. The interior, courtyard facades are similar to the exterior facades, with ornamentation consisting only of terra cotta lintels and sills. Railroad and truck access is from the west, between the two Annexes.

The main building and annexes are constructed of mill (timber) construction, with some of the later additions to the annexes having steel and concrete structural systems. The Grocery Building and Box Factory have concrete structural systems. The building is heated by steam radiators. The Tower, and the fourth through sixth floors of the Grocery Building, are air conditioned. The building is fully sprinklered.

The building was designed to house the merchandise storage, order handling, and shipping facilities for the Mail Order Plant. A review written at completion of the building stated, "This is one of the most important business buildings ever constructed in this country...it is to house a commercial plant of extraordinary extent and complication...."<sup>61</sup> By 1918, it also housed a U.S. Postal Substation and Express Company offices. Forty cars could fit in the skylighted train shed, where more than 120 car loads could be filled each day. The Tower of the building housed scientific laboratories for testing of wearing apparel, textiles, rubber and leather goods, fertilizers, drugs, paints, oils, and food products. The Grocery Building provided seven acres of floor space, with special heating, cooling, and ventilation systems, and areas for storage of foods at different temperatures.

The Merchandise Building was equipped with an extensive system elevators, conveyors, and seven spiral chutes to transport incoming merchandise to storage areas; to move merchandise through the order filling process; and to prepare outgoing merchandise for shipping. This equipment remained in use, with minor modifications and additions, until closing of the facility in 1987.

The Merchandise Building has also been known as the Chicago Mail Order Building or the Chicago Mail Order Offices.

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<sup>61</sup> "Notes & Comments: The Sears-Roebuck Building," *Architectural Record*, Volume 18, Number 8, August, 1905, pages 167.

### Administration Building (1905-1906)

The Administration Building is located at 3333 West Arthington Street, on a site bounded by Arthington Street on the north, the Power House and the Printing and Advertising Building Annex on the south, the Printing and Advertising Building on the east, and Homan Avenue on the west. The building is of masonry construction, I-shaped in plan, and measures approximately 436 feet (133 meters) by 141 feet (43 meters). The principal facade faces north, and the secondary street facade faces west.

The Administration Building was originally constructed with two stories above a raised basement. In 1914, the Administration Building was enlarged by the construction of the third through fifth floors. In 1917, the Service Building addition, consisting of a basement and first floor, was added at the rear.

The exterior walls of the Administration Building are red brick with white glazed terra cotta trim. Terra cotta elements includes the base of the building on the street facades, window pilasters and surrounds at the building corners, continuous belt courses above the second and fifth floors, sills, pier bases, and trim. The principal entrance at the center of the north facade is set within a pedimented portico. Terra cotta entablatures carry the words, "Sears Roebuck Co." and "Administration Building." A secondary street entrance is located at the center of the west facade. The building has wood glazed doors, and wood-framed, double-hung windows. The building has a shallow sloped, inverted membrane roof (originally slate), with skylights.

Several one-story entrance structures have been added to the building, as well as a large, one-story red brick structure housing Commonwealth Edison Substation vaults at the center of the south elevation. A metal-clad enclosed walkway at the second story level of the east elevation connects the Administration Building to the Printing and Advertising Building.

Original interior spaces include the vestibule and lobby, which have terrazzo floors and stairs, and marble wall cladding. Sears promotional literature noted that, "In quiet elegance we doubt whether this lobby is excelled in any building in the City of Chicago."<sup>62</sup> The principal corridors on the first floor also retain their original terrazzo floors and marble wainscots. At the lower floors, the stairs are terrazzo with ornamental newels and rails. The executive offices on the first floor also retain original finishes. Most of the other interior spaces in the building have been renovated. An escalator was added by 1910.

The structural system of the building is masonry and steel. The Administration Building has steam radiators and is air conditioned. It has a heat sensor fire alarm system.

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<sup>62</sup> "Lobby of the Administration Building," stereopticon slide, Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, circa 1908. Around 1908, Sears, Roebuck and Company produced a set of 50 stereo views which were available to customers for 50 cents a set. These stereopticon slides featured views of the Mail Order Plant and employees at work, including the Administration Building and gardens, Mr. Sears at his desk, receptionists at the Long Distance Telephone Switchboard, the Automatic Telephone Switchboard in basement of Administration Building, a Pneumatic Tube Station, and the main dining room in the basement of the Administration Building.

The Administration Building originally housed executive offices and the clerical force which received mail and dispatched orders to the Merchandise Building. On the first floor were located the Auditing and Banking Departments. The headquarters of Seroco Mutual Benefit Association and Employees' (*sic*) Savings Department were also located within. Sears promotional literature noted that, "This beautiful building with its large, well lighted and perfectly ventilated offices, is an ideal office structure, with every convenience and every office appliance designed to facilitate the prompt and accurate handling of the business transacted here."<sup>63</sup> The second floor housed the Mail Opening and Mail Auditing Departments, and the Correspondence Division, where 7,000 letters were handled each day by 1910. The building also contained a Recreation Room and Library.

Most of the restaurant facilities were located in the basement of the Administration Building; a cafeteria was also located in the basement of Merchandise Building. By 1908, five restaurants in the Administration Building, including Men's and Women's Cafeterias, a Grill Room, and a Dining Room, provided meals for 9,000 employees. Lunches were taken in shifts. The restaurants, which employed 100 workers, could feed 8,400 people in 1 hour and 20 minutes. Promotional material noted that all of the restaurants passed inspection by health authorities, and that "Every appliance, every convenience known to modern methods in the preparation of food is in use in this restaurant."<sup>64</sup> In 1910, a meal consisting of two sandwiches, coffee or milk, pie, cheese, and fruit could be purchased for nine cents. A separate cafeteria was available to employees who brought their own lunch.<sup>65</sup>

By 1918, departments housed in the building included Mail Opening and Cash Entry; Order Sorting; Entry Department, with 500 typists; Scribing Department, where labels were prepared by 300 clerks; Index and Routing, where records were kept; Distribution Department, which prepared shipping schedules for the various departments; Correspondence Department, with secretaries taking dictation and typing; Catalog Addressing Department, where 400 employees and 12 motor-driven addressing machines prepared address labels for 65 million catalogues by 1917. By the 1920s, the Administration Building processed 70,000 letters per day. A Medical Department was later added at the east end of the second floor of this building. The Administration Building has continued to be used for offices throughout its history.

#### Printing and Advertising Building (1905-1906)

The Printing and Advertising Building is located at 3301 West Arthington Street, on a site bounded by Arthington Street on the north, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad tracks on the south, Spaulding Avenue on the east, and the Administration Building and Power House on the west. The building is L-shaped in plan. The original portion of the building measures 86 feet (26 meters) by 310 feet (95 meters) in plan. The west wing (Annex)

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<sup>63</sup> "A Glimpse of the Administration Building" and "The Administration Building from the Pergola," stereopticon slides, Sears, Roebuck and Company archives, circa 1908.

<sup>64</sup> "Main Dining Room Seroco Restaurant," stereopticon slide, Sears, Roebuck and Company archives, circa 1908.

<sup>65</sup> "The Girls' Cafeteria," stereopticon slide, Sears, Roebuck and Company archives, circa 1908.

measures 120 feet (37 meters) by 177 feet (54 meters) in plan. The front facade of the building faces north.

As originally constructed, the Printing and Advertising Building was four stories in height. The Annex to the Printing and Advertising Building was constructed in 1909 as a four-story structure adjacent to the south half of the west facade of the original building. In 1913, a one-story addition was constructed along the railroad tracks, at the south side of the Annex. In 1914, fifth and sixth floors were constructed on the Printing and Advertising Building. In the following year, fifth and sixth floors were added to the Annex portion of the building.

The exterior facades of the Printing and Advertising Building are constructed of brick with brick, white-glazed terra cotta, and stone trim. Brick ornament includes piers on the front elevation, inset arches above the windows, and corbels above the second floor on the east wing and above the first and fourth floors on the west wing. Terra cotta trim includes window sills, a belt course above the first floor and above the fourth floor, and details including pier capitals and "bookmark" medallions above the fourth floor. The windows are wood-framed double-hung units.

The main entrance to the building is at the center of the north elevation of the east wing. There is a secondary pedestrian entrance and a vehicular entrance at the south end of the east facade, and a loading dock at the south side of the west elevation of the main portion of the building. On the east elevation, the Printing and Advertising Building is connected to the Allstate Building by a covered metal-clad passageway at the second floor level.

The original portion of the building is mill construction, with brick partition walls and steel roll-down doors between bays. The Annex has concrete columns and beams, with brick partition walls at fire stairs. The building has a flat roof that is presently covered with an inverted membrane roofing system. The building has steam radiator heat and air conditioning. It is completely sprinklered. The interior of the building has been substantially modified.

The Printing and Advertising Building was constructed to house the printing, binding, and electrotyping plant. From 1903 until 1923, the company printed its own catalogues at the Mail Order Plant. By 1912, more than 30 million pieces of advertising matter were produced each year. The main product was the General Catalogue, which at that date was 1,000 pages in length and weighed four pounds. The Building had 23 web perfecting rotary presses, and could produce 7 million catalogue pages per hour, using four carloads of white paper daily.

By 1918, the Printing and Advertising Building produced 6,500,000 large catalogues, special sales books, and other mailings each year. Its departments included the Composing Room, where 300 workers set type; the Press Room, where rotary presses could produce 8,000,000 catalogue pages per hour; four-color rotary multi-color presses; the Art and Engraving Department; the Electrotype Foundry and Finishing Room, where printing plates were made; Gathering and Binding machines that could bind 2,000 catalogues per hour; and Trimming Machines, which could trim 2,000 books per hour. Wrapping and shipping were also completed from the building.

After 1923, it became more economical to have the catalogues printed at outside plants. However, design and printing of other advertising material and preparation for mailing of catalogues continued on site. By the late 1940s, the company was printing two large and five small catalogues per year, with 11 regional editions. Approximately 50 million catalogues were printed and mailed each year.

The building was then used to house the merchandise testing and development program, previously located on the tenth floor of the tower in the Merchandise Building. After printing operations and advertising ceased at this building, it was used to house the testing laboratories that formerly occupied the Tower of the Merchandise Building. After 1961, the Printing and Advertising Building was known as Merchandise Development and Laboratory Building, a function it had held for some time.

#### **Power House (1905-1906)**

The Power House is located at 931 South Homan Avenue, on a site bounded by the Administration Building on the north, the Baltimore and Ohio railroad tracks on the south, the Printing and Advertising Building Annex on the east, and the Homan Avenue on the west. The Power House is a tall, single story space above a basement, and also has a mezzanine level. It measures 144 feet (44 meters) by 250 feet (76 meters) in plan. The front facade of the building faces west.

The exterior walls of the Power House are red pressed brick with brick and terra cotta trim and courses. Decorative terra cotta medallions are set along the top of the north wall. There are tall arched window openings in the east and west facades. The doors and windows are wood-framed. A stepped gable at the south end of the east and west facades conceals a rooftop water tank. The principal entrance is at the west end of the north facade, and is set between carved stone columns. There are wood and metal stairs and loading docks at the east elevation. A one-story brick addition projects from the south end of the east elevation, and reportedly houses oil tanks. The building has a sloped roof that is presently covered with an inverted membrane system, and a tall brick chimney stack.

The interior of the Power House is organized into two principal rooms at the first, main floor level. The north room has a red and white tile floor, white glazed brick walls, and terra cotta trim. In the north room, a mezzanine level extends along the center wall and is accessed by a metal stairway with an ornamental railing. There is a glass and metal skylight with two access walkways along the length of the ceiling. In the northwest corner of the north room is a wood and glass enclosed office. The south room is similar in configuration to the north room, but has unglazed brick walls and a concrete floor. Monitor skylights are located along the top of the center wall that divided the two main rooms. The structure of the building is masonry bearing walls with steel roof trusses.

The Power House originally provided power and heat, and generated electricity to operate conveyor belts, lighting, the pneumatic tube system, refrigeration plant, water pumps, and all other power needed by the Mail Order Plant. The mechanical equipment was designed by Martin C. Schwab of Adams and Schwab, consulting engineers, of Baltimore.

The building originally housed four direct connected generators with a capacity of 4,000 horsepower, and a 2,000 horsepower steam turbine with a generator. Fuel and ashes were handled mechanically. Underground tunnels carried pipes and wires from Power House to

all principal buildings. The tunnels provided a route for piping, pneumatic tubes, wiring, and tramways by which refuse could be taken back to the Power House and consumed by boilers.

Overall, the interior is unaltered except for the addition of modern machinery. The boilers are located in the basement. The main floor houses equipment to power the pneumatic tubing and elevators, pumps for water circulation and elevator operation. Two diesel generators for emergency power were added around 1970. Other new equipment includes air conditioning units and updated air compressors. A gas pump operates the sprinkler systems in the Merchandise Building, Wall Paper Mill, Printing and Advertising Building, and the basement of the Allstate Building. (The Administration Building has heat sensors.)

#### **Paint Factory (1905-1906) and Wall Paper Mill (1912)**

The Paint Factory is located at 3350 West Fillmore Street. The Wall Paper Mill has two addresses: 1012 South Spaulding Avenue, and 3340 West Fillmore Street. The Paint Factory and Wall Paper Mill are located on a site bounded by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad tracks on the north, Fillmore Street on the south, Spaulding Avenue on the east, and Homan Avenue on the west. The Paint Factory is 124 feet (38 meters) by 60 feet (18 meters) in plan. The Wall Paper Mill is 127 feet (39 meters) by 460 feet (140 meters) in plan. The two buildings are connected, and the principal entrances are in the south facade.

The Paint Factory was constructed as a two-story building in 1905-1906. In 1912, the five-story Wall Paper Mill was built adjacent to the paint factory. In 1919, two additional floors were added to the Paint Factory, and the adjacent New Paint Factory, consisting of a basement and five floors, was constructed. In the same year, a five-story addition to the Wall Paper Mill was completed.

The Paint Factory is four stories in height above a raised basement, and abuts the north side of the west elevation of the Wall Paper Mill. The facade is red brick with simple ornament including shallow brick arches over the windows, terra cotta copings, and metal stars at the ends of tension rods. The main entrance is at the north end of the west wall. At the west end of the north side of the Paint Factory, a metal-enclosed walkway extends across Homan Avenue to the Merchandise Building at the third floor level.

The Wall Paper Mill is five stories in height. This building is constructed of red brick with a stone base, and terra cotta trim. The windows are wood, double-hung units. Original scuppers with hinged metal covers are in place below many of the windows. There are five, rolling door vehicular entrances and a pedestrian entrance near the west end of the south elevation.

The utilitarian spaces within the Paint Factory retain their original timber construction, wood ceilings, wood floors, brick exterior walls, and metal sliding fire doors. The Wall Paper Mill retain original finishes including concrete columns and floors. The lobbies and offices have been renovated.

The Paint Factory is constructed with timber framing, and the Wall Paper Mill is constructed with concrete framing. Both buildings have steam radiator heat and air conditioning, and sprinkler systems. The roofs of both buildings are covered with ballasted inverted membrane systems.

The Paint Factory was constructed for manufacture of Sears, Roebuck and Company paint products to be sold by mail order, and later by retail stores. By 1918, more than one million gallons of paint were mixed each year. The entire paint manufacturing process was performed at the plant for Seroco brand ready-mixed paint: oils and pigments were mixed, components ground, the paint mixed by agitators, and packaged for sale.

The Wall Paper Mill was constructed for manufacture of Sears brands of paper products. By the 1920s, 35,000,000 rolls of paper were produced each year. Sears, Roebuck and Company controlled its source of paper supply, and used 7,000 tons of paper per year in the manufacture of ready-trimmed wallpaper. The in-house staff included artists and production personnel. Facilities included color mixing tanks, printing machines, and drying racks. The Paint Factory employed chemists to perform testing, as well as workers to run the mixing, stirring, and grinding machines located on different floors of the factory. This facility manufactured more than 1,250,000 gallons of ready-mixed paints each year in the 1920s.

After these buildings were no longer used for paint and wallpaper production, they were used as an office facility. The building was known as the Spaulding Building, and after 1961 was called the Data Processing Center.

#### **Carpenter Shop (1907)**

The Carpenter Shop was located at the northwest corner of Central Park Avenue and Arthington Street. This was a two-story building with a cement floor and wood frame. In this building were provided carpentry and related support services for the Mail Order Plant. A lumber yard and shed were located directly north of the Carpenter Shop. The Carpenter Shop was demolished after 1969.

#### **Old Garage (1907)**

The Old Garage was located on the south side of Fillmore Street, between Central Park Avenue and Independence Boulevard. This was a one-story structure with brick walls, concrete floors, and a wood truss roof structure. The Old Garage was demolished circa 1982.

#### **Garden and Pergola (1907)**

The garden opposite the Administration Building was created circa 1907. The garden occupies the south half of the block bounded by Polk Street on the north, Arthington Street on the south, Spaulding Avenue on the east, and Homan Avenue on the west. The north half of the block is occupied by a parking lot. The garden faces the north facade of the Administration Building.

The central feature of the garden is the pergola, which is located at the center along the north edge of the garden and approached by concrete walks. The pergola is approximately 106 feet (32 meters) by 22 feet (seven meters) in plan. The sunken garden in front of the pergola originally featured a large pool with fountains. The pool has been filled in to grade. The garden features various ground plantings.

The pergola is constructed of concrete and wood. Concrete steps at each end lead to a concrete walk along the length of the structure. There are raised planters with evergreens

along the north and south sides of the pergola. At each end of the pergola is a pedimented portico of concrete; overhanging wood beams extend between the porticos and cover the center walkway. The beams are supported on smooth Doric columns. The concrete porticos are covered with cementitious stucco that is painted white. Each portico has a red tile gabled roof. The roof ends have dentilated pediments above an entablature that is supported on fluted Doric columns.

The garden as originally realized included various plantings and a "lake" containing goldfish and three fountains. A series of promotional stereopticon slides created by the firm circa 1908 noted that the pergola and garden were planned "as a veritable bower," and explained that the purpose of the garden was "so that our employes (*sic*) may be attracted out of doors during the noon recess, because a change of environment and attractive surroundings send them back to work again greatly refreshed and forgetful of the little annoyances of the morning."<sup>66</sup> Sears promotional literature commented:

Indeed our plant is located in an ideal spot where the air is pure, and there is plenty of sunshine; since we have beautified our grounds...the surroundings of those who work for us are unusually attractive. We believe these surroundings inspire our workers to better things and make for contentment and happiness.<sup>67</sup>

In the 1910s, an employee wrote of the benefits this garden provided to workers at the Mail Order Plant:

If anything was needed to educate the employes to the fact that Sears, Roebuck and Company have their interest at heart, the flower gardens that are situated in front of the Administration Building would successfully do it. They are an addition to the plant and a valuable asset in beautifying the surroundings....It would be difficult to find any one of the employes (*sic*) of Sears, Roebuck and Company to whom our gardens do not convey a definite and more or less accurate impression of the real beauty of flowers. The gardens are available to all of us and a little time spent in them every day is well worth the while. You cannot help but realize that the spirit of progress is shown in our flower gardens as well as in the departments of this great institution.<sup>68</sup>

With minor changes to the fountains, paving, and plantings, the Garden has been maintained in its original configuration. The Pergola is also intact.

#### Men's and Women's Field Houses (1908)

The Men's Field House was located at the northeast corner of Arthington Street and St. Louis Avenue, facing west. The block containing the Men's Field House was given over to

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<sup>66</sup> Stereopticon slide, Sears, Roebuck and Company archives, circa 1908.

<sup>67</sup> "The Administration Building from the Pergola," stereopticon slide, Sears, Roebuck and Company archives, circa 1908.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from G.E. Sanborn, Department 147, to Mr. I.S. Rosenfels, July 15, 1918.



an athletic field with a running track, an indoor baseball practice area, and a baseball diamond at the northwest corner of Arthington Street and Homan Avenue. The Woman's Field House was located on the north side of Arthington Street, between St. Louis and Central Park Avenues. This block also originally contained tennis courts. Both of these structures were completed in 1908, and were one story in height. The Women's Field House was demolished prior to 1929. The Men's Field House was demolished some time after 1929 and prior to 1961.

#### **YMCA Building (1910)**

The YMCA Building is located at 3210 West Arthington Street, on a site bounded by Polk Street on the north, Arthington Street on the south, Kedzie Avenue on the east, and a parking garage on the west. The YMCA Building is five stories in height and measures approximately 201 feet (61 meters) by 209 feet (64 meters) in plan. It is E-shaped in plan. The front facade of the building faces south; the east facade is a secondary street facade.

The YMCA Building is constructed of brick with ornamental brick gables and terra cotta trim including belt courses, window surrounds, and sills. There is a decorative brick pattern inset with terra cotta tile above the first floor level. The building has glazed wood doors and wood-framed, double-hung windows. The main entrance near the center of the south elevation is flanked by polished granite columns with carved stone capitals.

Interior spaces that retain original features include the room at the south side of the second floor, which has a barrel vault ceiling with ornamental plaster, brick fireplace, and wood wainscoting, trim, and office partitions.

The YMCA was constructed by Sears, Roebuck and Company as a branch of the YMCA of Chicago, to provide recreational, social, and educational facilities for Sears workers. It offered a gymnasium, swimming pool, reading room, and 300 residential rooms. Some Sears employees lived at the YMCA.

#### **1911-1930 Building Campaigns**

As described in detail above with reference to specific buildings, the decade of the 1910s saw the expansion of the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, and the Printing and Advertising Building. In 1912 the Grocery Building and Box Factory were constructed at the west end of Annex B. In the same year, the Wall Paper Mill was constructed adjacent to the Paint Factory. An addition to the Printing and Advertising Building was constructed in 1913.

Between 1913 and 1916, additions were made to the west end of the Merchandise Building Annex B. In 1914, additions were made to the Administration Building and to the Printing and Advertising Building. A further addition was made to the Administration Building in 1917. Additions to the Merchandise Building Annex A were completed in 1917, and to the Paint Factory and Wall Paper Mill in 1919. These additions are described above, together with original construction and other improvements to these buildings.

In addition to expansion of the original Mail Order Plant buildings, several new structures were built at the site in this decade, as described below.

**Apartment Building (pre-1910; in use by Sears circa 1911)**

An apartment building for the Mail Order Plant's fire chief and chief of police was located directly east of the Fire Station, east of Homan Avenue on Polk Street. Historic photographs suggest that this was a two-story apartment building above a raised basement, constructed with a stone-clad street facade and brick side walls. This building was constructed after 1896 but prior to 1910, and was probably acquired by Sears, Roebuck and Company to house its personnel rather than being built for Sears. This building has been demolished.

**Fire Station and Engine House (circa 1911)**

The Fire Station was located at the southeast corner of Homan Avenue and Polk Street. This was a two-story building of brick construction. A one-story brick Engine House was also constructed directly south of the Fire Station. Both of these buildings were completed circa 1911. The on-site Fire Department responded to a completely automatic electric signal system. In addition to its own fire truck, the Mail Order Plant had its own police service and traffic control service. The Fire Station and Engine House have been demolished.

**Central Park Building (1912)**

In 1912, the five-story Central Park Building was constructed at the northwest corner of Central Park Avenue and Fillmore Street. This was a fireproof masonry building with concrete floors and brick curtain walls. By the 1920s, this building housed business machine repair facilities on the first floor, a sign shop on the second floor, and a window shade factory on the third floor. From 1961, it was known as the General Services Building, at which time it was used for maintenance of customer motors for boats and lawnmowers. This building was demolished in December, 1987.

**Property Building (1912)**

The five-story Property Building was also built in 1912. It was of fireproof construction, with brick walls and concrete structural elements. Located at the southwest corner of Central Park Avenue and Arthington Street, this building provided offices and warehouse space. From 1961, it was known as the Construction and Display Building. It was demolished in December, 1993.

**Standard Brands Building (1913)**

The Standard Brands Building, a two-story masonry building constructed in 1913, was located on the north side of Fillmore Street, east of Independence Boulevard. The original function of this building was to house baking powder production. In recent years, this building housed office supplies for Sears, Roebuck and Company's corporate and retail store offices. From 1961, it was known as the Division of Supplies Building. It was demolished circa 1980.

**Fillmore Street Garage (1917)**

In 1917, the Fillmore Street Garage, a one-story structure, was built on the south side of Fillmore Street, between Central Park Avenue and Independence Boulevard. The garage

was constructed for Sears company vehicles, including automobiles, trucks, and semi-trailers. The garage was demolished circa 1980.

**Manufacturing Building No. 1 (pre-1918)**

By 1918, Manufacturing Building No. 1 had been constructed west of the Grocery Building. This building housed facilities for the manufacture of trunks and tents carried by Sears, Roebuck and Company. Wood was dried in kilns, tongue grooved and glued, and the completed trunks painted and varnished. In addition to trunks, products fabricated at Manufacturing Building No. 1 included Fulton Brand 19-inch full weight duck tents, covers, tarpaulins, and awnings. Cotton duck fabric was purchased from mills for this process. By the 1920s, more than 50,000 trunks and 10,000 tents were produced annually. A portion of the facility was also used for production of shipping boxes for the Mail Order Plant. This building was demolished, probably during the 1960s prior to construction of the Catalogues Operation Building.

**Green House (pre-1919)**

Other additions to the site by 1919 included a Green House for plantings. The location of this structure is not documented; it was probably sited near the Garden.

**Metal Cabinet Works (late 1920s)**

By the late 1920s, a Metal Cabinet Works had been constructed at the southwest corner of Fillmore Street and Central Park Avenue. This was a tall, one-story structure with brick walls, concrete floors, and a wood truss roof structure lighted by monitor skylights. This building was originally used for fabrication of metal cabinets. It was known as the Catalogue Distribution Building by the 1960s, at which time it was used for processing of catalogues and advertising for mailings. The building was later used as a Sign Shop. It has been demolished.

**Garage (pre-1929)**

By 1929, a Garage structure had been constructed directly west of the Old Garage, on the south side of Fillmore Street, east of Independence Boulevard. This was a one-story structure with concrete floors, brick walls, and a wood truss roof. It also housed a Fur Cleaning department. This building was known as the Supplies Annex Building by the early 1960s, and was later used for tire storage. It has been demolished.

**Storage Building (pre-1929)**

By 1929, a one-story Storage Building had been constructed directly east of the Carpenter Shop. This was a masonry structure with a bowstring truss roof structure. The Storage Building was demolished prior to 1964.

**Service Station and Auto Parts Building (pre-1929)**

Also by 1929, a Service Station including a car wash was constructed on the north side of Arthington Street, between Homan Avenue and St. Louis Avenue. An Auto Parts building was located east of the Service Station. Both buildings have been demolished.

**Warehouse (pre-1929)**

A timber frame warehouse was constructed directly east of the Standard Brands Building by 1929.

**Garden Shop (circa 1930)**

A Garden Shop was located at the northwest corner of Arthington Street and Homan Avenue by circa 1930. This has also been demolished.

During the first several decades of this century, as the Mail Order Plant was constructed and expanded, significant residential development occurred in the area surrounding the plant. By the late 1920s, the entire area was developed with either residential, light industrial, or Sears Mail Order Plant occupancies. Most of the residential buildings were two and three story masonry structures, with some frame dwellings interspersed. In addition to the Sears properties described above, various manufacturing properties were located in the area, mostly along Fillmore Street. These included a wooden box factory, refrigerator parts factory, sheet metal shop, and the Cinch Manufacturing Corporation.<sup>69</sup> A City Water Pumping Station was located at the northeast corner of Fillmore Street and Central Park Avenue.

**1949: The Allstate Building**

The Allstate Building is located at 3245 West Arthington Street, on a site bounded by Arthington Street on the north, a parking lot on the south and east, and Spaulding Avenue on the west. The Allstate Building is ten stories in height above a basement and measures approximately 160 feet (49 meters) by 218 feet (66 meters) in plan. It is rectangular in plan. The front facade of the building faces north.

The facades of the Allstate Building are composed of horizontal bands of metal-framed, double-hung ribbon windows alternated with horizontal bands of red brick, with dark brown at the first floor. The main entrance to the building is an aluminum and glass curtain wall system at the center of the north elevation. A metal-enclosed walkway extends from the Allstate Building to the parking structure directly to the north.

The building retains several original interior spaces, including the main lobby which has terrazzo floors and stairs, and green marble and plaster walls. The elevator lobbies and corridors also retain original terrazzo floors, wood wainscot, wood doors, and plaster ceilings. Most offices also retain some of their original finishes.

The structural system of the building is a concrete frame. Mechanical systems include steam radiator heat and air conditioning.

The Allstate Building was constructed to house the offices of Allstate, Sears, Roebuck and Company's insurance company. Allstate, initiated as Sears' brand of tires in the late 1920s,

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<sup>69</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vicinity of Arthington Street and Homan Avenue, 1929. The manufacturing facilities listed in the preceding sentence were not identified on the Sanborn map as part of the Sears, Roebuck and Company complex, although the Mail Order Plant did include various manufacturing facilities by this date.

also offered automobile supplies and accessories. By 1931, Allstate services included automobile insurance, later supplemented by a companion firm, Allstate Fire Insurance. The Allstate Building was later used for other Sears offices, and after 1961 was known as the Merchandise Headquarters Building.

#### Later Construction at the Mail Order Plant

By the 1960s, demolition of some of the older structures at the complex had occurred, as noted above. The physical fabric of the residential area surrounding the Mail Order Plant had also begun to deteriorate, with demolitions occurring over the next few decades.

The major developments at the Sears complex during the 1960s involved constructed of new parking lots were being created around the buildings of the plants. A new east entrance was constructed for Administration Building, providing a two-level entrance with stairs to the basement and first floor. An adjacent wall between the Administration Building and the Printing and Advertising Building (then called the Merchandise Development Laboratory Building) was constructed, with a three-level lift for truck goods transfer.<sup>70</sup>

#### **Parking Garages**

On September 25, 1964, a new, three-level parking garage opened at Polk and Homan Streets. The brick and concrete structure provided 1,350 spaces over 466,122 square feet of floor space. It was designed by Dunlap and Esgar, Inc., architects, of Chicago, the successor firm to Nimmons, Carr & Wright and Nimmons and Fellows, who had designed the Mail Order Plant. Contractors for the garage were the Miller-Davis Company of Melrose Park.<sup>71</sup> After 1964 but prior to 1969, the East Parking Deck was constructed across Arthington Avenue from the Allstate Building.

#### **Tower Automotive Center**

On April 2, 1964, the Tower Store Automotive Center opened at 3452 Polk Street. The 50,000 square foot center included 12 gas islands, 235 parking spaces, and a two-story brick building. The second floor was used for storage. The center was designed by John Stokes Redden, Architect, and constructed by B-W Construction Co. of Chicago.<sup>72</sup>

#### **Catalogue Operations Building**

The Catalogue Operations Building was constructed in 1964 on the lot bounded by Central Park Avenue, Lawndale Avenue, Arthington Street, and the railroad tracks. This building was immediately adjacent to the Property Services Building to the north. It was constructed with a steel frame and metal cladding. The Catalogue Operations Building, also known as

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<sup>70</sup> "Progress Report on the Modernization and Improvement Program," Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1962.

<sup>71</sup> Press release, "Sears Parking Garage to Open," by John D. Austin, Public Relations, Sears Roebuck and Company, 1964.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Building 188, was the site of shipping operations from the 1960s until closing of the plant in 1987. It was connected by metal-clad pedestrian bridges to the west ends of Annex A and the Grocery Building. The Catalogue Operations Building was demolished in December, 1993.

#### **Surface Parking Lots**

By the late 1960s, extensive surface parking for employees and customers had been added in lots at the northwest corner of Central Park and Arthington; in the block bounded by Central Park, Lawndale, Arthington, and the railroad tracks; south of the railroad tracks between Central Park and Independence; in the block bounded by Central Park, St. Louis, Arthington, and Polk; in the block bounded by St. Louis, Homan, Arthington, and Polk; behind the Allstate Building in the lot bounded by Spaulding, Kedzie, Arthington, and the railroad tracks; and in lots at the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of Spaulding and Fillmore Streets. With the exception of the Garden, most of the open space between buildings and in adjacent empty lots within the complex was taken up by surface parking.

## Sources of Information

### Archival Drawings

Archival copies of the following drawings are included in this HABS documentation. An annotated list of the drawings is included with that portion of the HABS documentation.

### Site Plans

*Sears, Roebuck and Co., Approximately 1/8 inch to 12 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 198, 4 November 1937.*

*Plot of Sears Complex - Homan-Arthington Area, One inch to 100 feet, Prepared by Sears Departments 730 and 824, 26 October 1960.*

### Architectural Drawings

*First Floor Plan, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 16 February 1905.*

*Tower Floor Plans, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905.*

*North Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*South Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*East Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*West Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*Transverse and Longitudinal Sections, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 14 February 1905.*

*Tower Plans and Details, 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted, Nimmons and Fellows, 15 March 1905.*

*Tower Plans and Details, 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted, Nimmons and Fellows; E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers), 15 March 1905.*

*Detail Elevations and Sections, 1/2 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905.*

*First Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*North Elevation - Annex "A", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*South Elevation - Annex "A", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*North Elevation - Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*West Elevation - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Transverse Section - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Detail Elevations - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/2 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Annex "B," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*South Elevation (Annex "A," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*West Elevation and Transverse Section (Annex "A," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Basement Floor Plan, 1/8 inch to one foot, George C. Nimmons (?), date obscured (1912).*

*North Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*South Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*West Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*Schematic Floor Plan, 1/64 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 131, 25 June 1917.*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Two sheets), 1/16 inch to one foot, Larsen-Wulff Architects, Undated.*

#### **Conveyor and Pneumatic Tube Systems**

*Section through Merchandise Building Looking East Showing System of Conveyors in Shipping Department, 1/4 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, 26 April 1905.*

*Conveyors - Merchandise Building, 1/16 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, Revised 10 May 1905.*

*Details of Spiral Conveyors in Merchandise Building, 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, 13 May 1905.*



*Arrangement of Shipping Room Belt Conveyors in Merchandise Building for Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Undated (probably before 1913).*

*General Layout of All Mdse Dept. Conveyors, 1/16 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 213 (engineer unknown), 6 October 1916.*

*General Layout of Pneumatic Tubes - Sheets 1, 2, 3, and 9, One inch to 60 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown), Undated (probably around 1920).*

*Rearrangement of Receiving Racks, Conveyors, Etc., 3/16 inch to one foot, Engineer Unknown, Revised 2 November 1937.*

*2nd Floor Section "B", 1/4 inch to one foot, Swain and Meyers, Inc., 24 June 1963*

#### Field Record Drawings

Copies of the following drawings are included in the field record with this HABS documentation. An annotated list of the drawings is included with the field record.

#### Site Plan Drawings

*Plat of Survey, One inch to twenty feet, Gustav H. Carlson (surveyor), 30 January 1905.*

#### Architectural Drawings

*North Elevation, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*Wall Section Detail, scale as noted, Nimmons and Fellows; E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers), 16 February 1905.*

*Basement Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Second Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Third Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Roof Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*South Elevation - Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Details of Platforms, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Ninth Floor Plan (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Roof Plan (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Detail Elevation (Annexes "A" and "B," for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Roof Plan (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*Layout of Merchandise Building, 1/64 inch to one foot, Drawn Sears Department 131, 25 June 1917.*

*Floor Plan - 14th Floor Tower, 3/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 224, 19 March 1923.*

*Alterations to Merchandise Building for Retail Store, 1/16 inch to one foot, George C. Nimmons and Company, Revised 22 December 1924.*

*Floor Plan of First Floor Merchandise, 1/16 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 224, 26 December 1924.*

*Entrance Remodeling - Plans and Details, scale as noted, John Stokes Redden, 14 April 1961.*

#### **Conveyor and Pneumatic Tube Systems**

*Pneumatic Tube Station, Three inches to one foot, Adams and Schwab, Revised 28 December 1905.*

*General Arrangement of Empty Box Conveyor for Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1/16 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Revised 27 March 1913.*

*Arrangement Showing Billing and Empty Basket Return Belts in Shipping Room for Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Revised 12 December 1914.*

*Spiral Chute to be Installed in N.W. Corner Section L in the Merchandise Building, 1/4 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 28 May 1919.*

*Extension to Present Spiral Gravity Conveyor in Section "H" of the Merchandise Building, 1/4 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 9 July 1919.*

*General Layout of Pneumatic Tubes - Sheets 4 through 8, and 10 through 14, One inch to 60 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown), Undated (probably around 1920).*

*Conveyor Plan for Post Office in Merchandise Building, 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 4 June 1920.*

*Space Occupied by Post Office at Sears-Roebuck Mail Order House, 1/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by the United States Post Office, October 1944.*

*Department 155 Layout - Second Floor Truck Court, 1/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 131M (Engineer Unknown), Revised 20 May 1965.*

### Early Views

*Overall view of Administration Building and Merchandise Building, view to southwest, across garden. Photograph circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Overall view of Printing and Advertising Building, Administration Building, and Merchandise Building, view to west-southwest. Photograph circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Overall view of Merchandise Building, Power House, and Administration Building, view to northwest. Photograph circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Overall view of Mail Order Plant, view to south. Rendering dated February 15, 1913, original rendering in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Artist unknown.*

*Overall view of Printing and Advertising Building, Administration Building, and Merchandise Building, view to southeast. Photograph circa 1920s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*View of garden and pergola, view to northeast from Administration Building roof. Photograph circa 1940s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Aerial view of Mail Order Plant and surrounding neighborhood, view to southeast. Photograph circa 1950, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Aerial view of Mail Order Plant and surrounding neighborhood, view to west. Photograph circa 1950, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Overall view of Administration Building and Merchandise Building, view to southwest. Photograph circa 1964, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

### Interviews

*Interviews of Mr. Thomas Dorgan, Building Manager, Charles H. Shaw Company, at Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Administration Building, by Jeffrey P. Koerber, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, February-March, 1994.*

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
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HABS  
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HABS No. IL-1187

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant  
Bounded by Lexington Street (north), Grenshaw (south), Kedzie Avenue (east), and  
Independence Boulevard (west)  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

Documentation: 6 exterior photographs (1994)  
8 photographic copies of photographs  
1 photographic copy of rendering  
2 photographic copies of drawings

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer March, 1994

- IL-1187-1 GARDEN, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-2 PRINTING AND ADVERTISING BUILDING, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, MERCHANDISE BUILDING, AND GARDEN, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-3 WALL PAPER MILL, POWER HOUSE, AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING IN DISTANCE, PRINTING AND ADVERTISING BUILDING, AND ALLSTATE BUILDING, VIEW TO NORTHWEST
- IL-1187-4 MERCHANDISE BUILDING WITH POWER HOUSE IN DISTANCE, VIEW TO NORTHEAST; CITY OF CHICAGO WATER PUMPING FACILITY TO RIGHT OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-5 MERCHANDISE BUILDING, BRIDGE, PAINT FACTORY, AND WALL PAPER MILL, VIEW TO NORTHEAST
- IL-1187-6 OVERALL VIEW OF GARDEN WITH PERGOLA, NORTHWEST CORNER OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, AND WEST ELEVATION OF ALLSTATE BUILDING AND YMCA BUILDING IN DISTANCE, VIEW TO NORTHEAST
- IL-1187-7 ALLSTATE BUILDING AND YMCA BUILDING, WITH ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN DISTANCE, VIEW TO WEST
- IL-1187-8 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST, ACROSS GARDEN



Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant  
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- IL-1187-9      Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF PRINTING AND ADVERTISING BUILDING, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO WEST-SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-10     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1908, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, POWER HOUSE, AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, VIEW TO NORTHWEST
- IL-1187-11     Photographic copy of rendering (February 15, 1913, original rendering in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Artist unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF MAIL ORDER PLANT, VIEW TO SOUTH
- IL-1187-12     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1920s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF PRINTING AND ADVERTISING BUILDING, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
- IL-1187-13     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1940s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
VIEW OF GARDEN AND PERGOLA, VIEW TO NORTHEAST FROM ADMINISTRATION BUILDING ROOF
- IL-1187-14     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1950, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
AERIAL VIEW OF MAIL ORDER PLANT AND SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD, VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
- IL-1187-15     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1950, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
AERIAL VIEW OF MAIL ORDER PLANT AND SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD, VIEW TO WEST
- IL-1187-16     Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1964, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant  
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- IL-1187-17      Photographic copy of drawing (4 November 1927, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 198. Approximately 1/8 inch to 12 feet. Shows major buildings of complex without curb lines and block boundaries marked only at corners.  
SITE PLAN
- IL-1187-18      Photographic copy of drawing (16 October 1960, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Prepared by Sears Departments 730 and 824. One inch to 100 feet. Area shown extends from the Eisenhower Expressway on the north to Roosevelt Road on the south, including all of the major buildings of the complex except for parking garages and the Catalogue Operations Building added circa 1964.  
PLOT OF SEARS COMPLEX - HOMAN-ARTHINGTON AREA



HABS No. 1L-1187-1



HABS No. 2L-1187-2





HABS No. 1L-1187-3

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HAB No. 1L-1187-5



HABS No. 11-1187-6





HABS No. 12-1187-7















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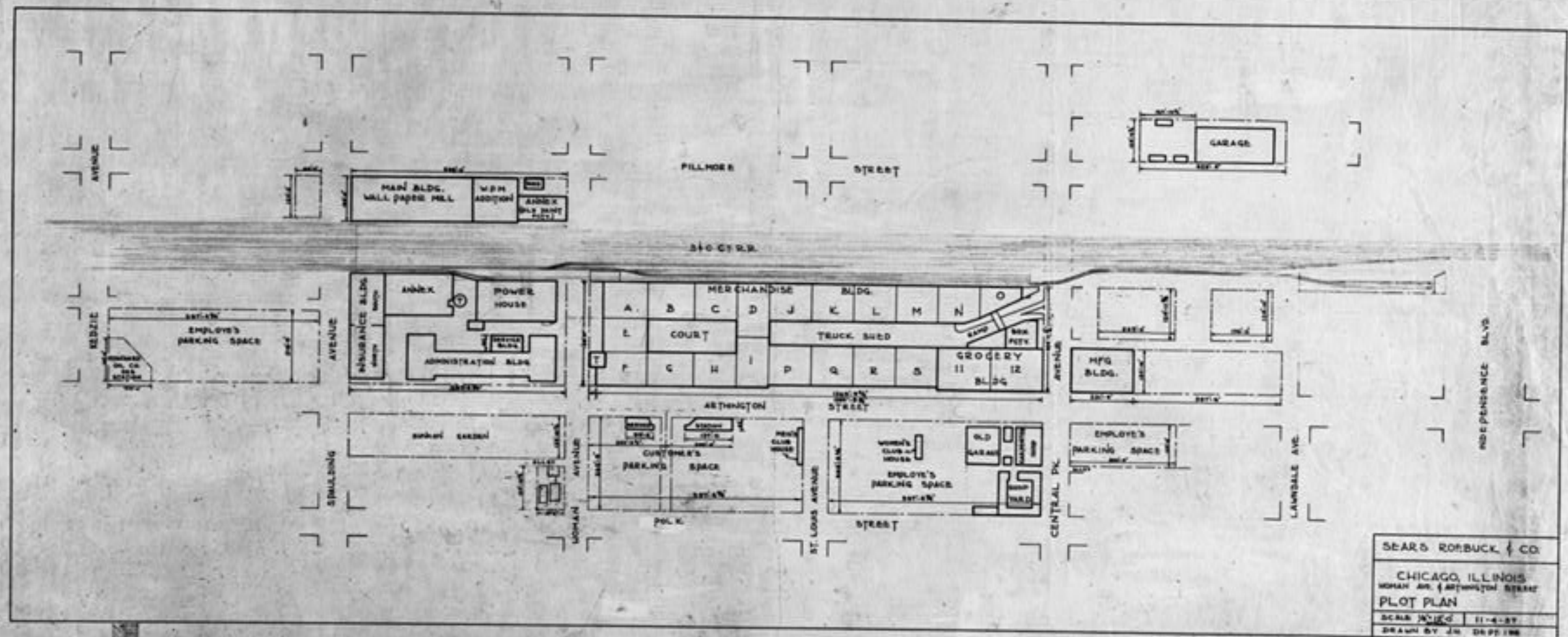
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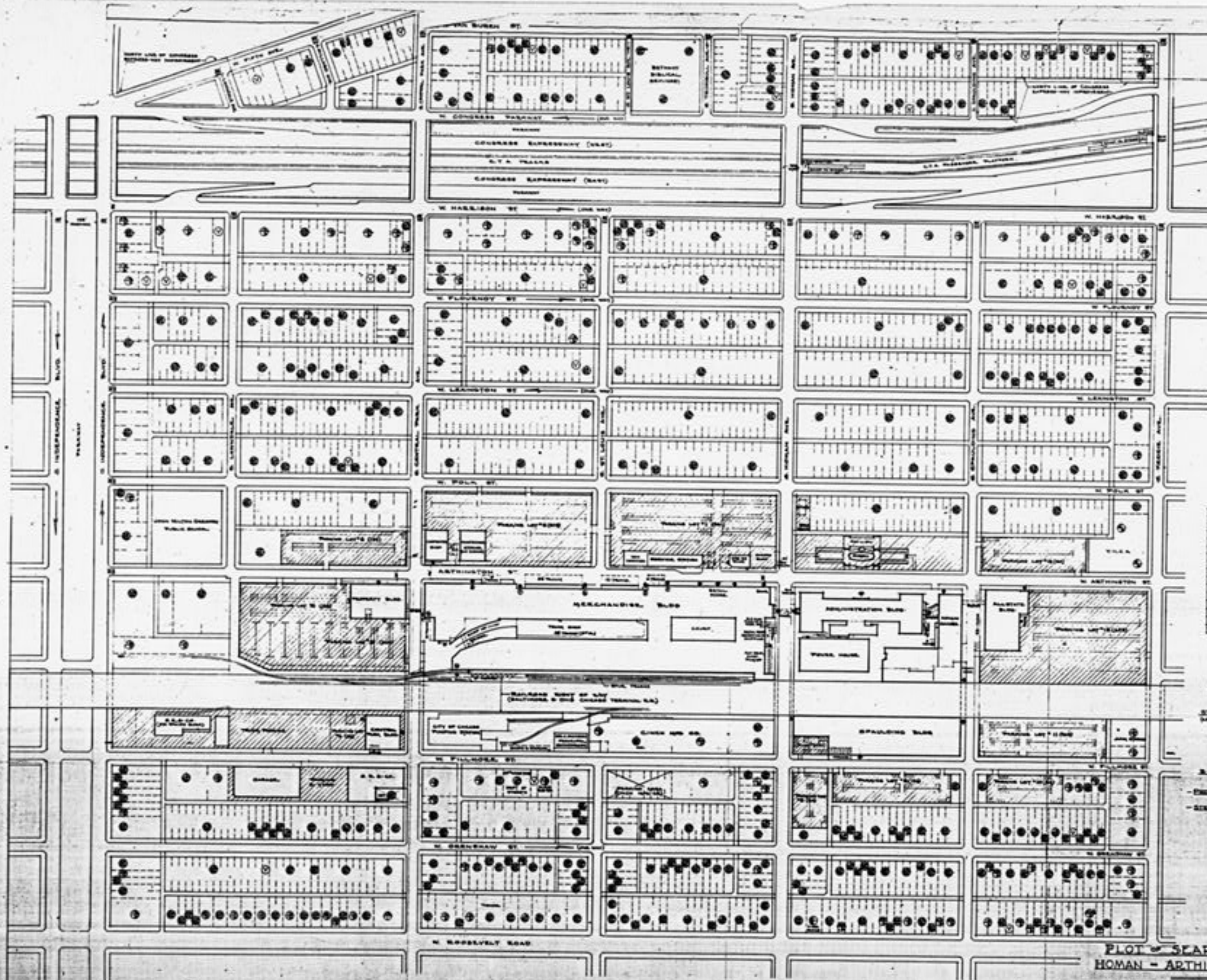












**PARKING LOT CHART**

LOT	AREA	NO. OF SPACES	NO. OF SPACES AVAILABLE
1	100' x 100'	100	100
2	100' x 100'	100	100
3	100' x 100'	100	100
4	100' x 100'	100	100
5	100' x 100'	100	100
6	100' x 100'	100	100
7	100' x 100'	100	100
8	100' x 100'	100	100
9	100' x 100'	100	100
10	100' x 100'	100	100
11	100' x 100'	100	100
12	100' x 100'	100	100
13	100' x 100'	100	100
14	100' x 100'	100	100
15	100' x 100'	100	100
16	100' x 100'	100	100
17	100' x 100'	100	100
18	100' x 100'	100	100
19	100' x 100'	100	100
20	100' x 100'	100	100
21	100' x 100'	100	100
22	100' x 100'	100	100
23	100' x 100'	100	100
24	100' x 100'	100	100
25	100' x 100'	100	100
26	100' x 100'	100	100
27	100' x 100'	100	100
28	100' x 100'	100	100
29	100' x 100'	100	100
30	100' x 100'	100	100
31	100' x 100'	100	100
32	100' x 100'	100	100
33	100' x 100'	100	100
34	100' x 100'	100	100
35	100' x 100'	100	100
36	100' x 100'	100	100
37	100' x 100'	100	100
38	100' x 100'	100	100
39	100' x 100'	100	100
40	100' x 100'	100	100
41	100' x 100'	100	100
42	100' x 100'	100	100
43	100' x 100'	100	100
44	100' x 100'	100	100
45	100' x 100'	100	100
46	100' x 100'	100	100
47	100' x 100'	100	100
48	100' x 100'	100	100
49	100' x 100'	100	100
50	100' x 100'	100	100
51	100' x 100'	100	100
52	100' x 100'	100	100
53	100' x 100'	100	100
54	100' x 100'	100	100
55	100' x 100'	100	100
56	100' x 100'	100	100
57	100' x 100'	100	100
58	100' x 100'	100	100
59	100' x 100'	100	100
60	100' x 100'	100	100
61	100' x 100'	100	100
62	100' x 100'	100	100
63	100' x 100'	100	100
64	100' x 100'	100	100
65	100' x 100'	100	100
66	100' x 100'	100	100
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69	100' x 100'	100	100
70	100' x 100'	100	100
71	100' x 100'	100	100
72	100' x 100'	100	100
73	100' x 100'	100	100
74	100' x 100'	100	100
75	100' x 100'	100	100
76	100' x 100'	100	100
77	100' x 100'	100	100
78	100' x 100'	100	100
79	100' x 100'	100	100
80	100' x 100'	100	100
81	100' x 100'	100	100
82	100' x 100'	100	100
83	100' x 100'	100	100
84	100' x 100'	100	100
85	100' x 100'	100	100
86	100' x 100'	100	100
87	100' x 100'	100	100
88	100' x 100'	100	100
89	100' x 100'	100	100
90	100' x 100'	100	100
91	100' x 100'	100	100
92	100' x 100'	100	100
93	100' x 100'	100	100
94	100' x 100'	100	100
95	100' x 100'	100	100
96	100' x 100'	100	100
97	100' x 100'	100	100
98	100' x 100'	100	100
99	100' x 100'	100	100
100	100' x 100'	100	100

**LEGEND**  
SURROUNDING PROPERTIES

**STORIES**  
(Shaded areas)

**USAGE**  
D - Dwellings  
F - Factory  
C - Commercial  
S - Storage  
O - Office  
A - Automobile  
R - Railroad  
V - Vacant

**CONSTRUCTION**  
S - Foundation  
F - Frame

**PROPERTY LINES**  
- - - - -

**STREET WIDTH**  
- - - - -



**PLOT OF SEARS COMPLEX  
HOMAN - ARTHINGTON AREA**

PREPARED BY DEPT 790 AND DEPT 854  
SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY  
CHICAGO, ILL.  
OCT 20, 1940

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY  
MAIL ORDER PLANT, MERCHANDISE BUILDING  
924 South Homan Avenue  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1187-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287



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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT, MERCHANDISE BUILDING  
HABS No. IL-1187-A

Location: 924 South Homan Avenue  
(Homan Avenue at Arthington Street)  
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

Quad: Englewood Quadrangle, Illinois - Cook County

UTM: 16.441030.4635340

Dates of Construction: 1905-1917

Architects: George C. Nimmons and William K. Fellows  
George C. Nimmons & Co. (additions)  
Nimmons & Co. (additions)

Engineers: Adams and Schwab, Consulting Engineers  
E.C. and R.N. Shankland, Structural Engineers

Builder: Thompson Starrett Company

Present Owner: Sears, Roebuck and Company  
Hoffman Estates, Illinois

Present Occupant: Sears, Roebuck and Company

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Merchandise Building was one of the first buildings completed for the Mail Order Plant in 1905-1906. It was designed by the nationally-known architectural firm of Nimmons and Fellows, with additions designed by successor firms George C. Nimmons & Co. and Nimmons & Co. The Merchandise Building was the largest building and housed the majority of the company's employees at the Mail Order Plant. In a bustling complex, the Merchandise Building was the center of activity. All incoming and outgoing goods passed through the Merchandise Building. All of the other building at the site provided support for the activities within the Merchandise Building by offering administration, manufacturing, and other support functions. The Mail Order Plant and its central Merchandise Building have been described as "a huge, finely tuned machine for receiving and holding merchandise and for filing and shipping orders."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James C. Worthy, *Shaping an American Institution: Robert E. Wood and Sears, Roebuck*, page 29.

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building  
HABS No. IL-1187-A (Page 2)

Report Prepared by:

Deborah Slaton, Senior Architectural Conservator  
Jeffrey Koerber, Architect/Engineer II  
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Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.  
29 North Wacker Drive, Suite 555  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Date:

April 20, 1994

**PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

**A. Physical History:**

**1. Dates of erection:**

**a. 1905 construction**

Merchandise Building - basement to ninth floor, Sections A, B, C,  
D, E, F, G, H, I  
Merchandise Building Annex A - basement to third floor Sections J,  
K, L, M, N, O  
Merchandise Building Annex B - basement to third floor Sections P,  
Q, R, S

**b. 1910 construction**

Addition to Annex A - fourth to ninth floors, Sections J, K  
Addition to Annex B - fourth to ninth floors, Sections P, Q

**c. 1912 construction**

Grocery Building - basement to sixth floor, Sections 11 and 12  
Box Factory - partial basement, first and second floors

**d. 1913-1916 construction**

Addition to Annex B - fourth to ninth floors, Sections R, S

**e. 1917 construction**

Addition to Annex A, fourth to ninth floor Sections L, M, N, O

**f. Later construction and alterations**

Interior renovations (as described below)  
Alteration of entry area facade at first and second floors (1959)

**2. The Architects: Nimmons and Fellows**

The firm of Nimmons and Fellows was responsible for the design of the original buildings of the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant in Chicago, including the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, the Printing and Advertising Building, the Power House, and the Paint Factory.

**a. George Croll Nimmons, FAIA.** George Croll Nimmons was born in Wooster, Ohio, in 1867 and educated at the local academy. After graduating, he studied architecture in Europe. Nimmons returned to the United States and in 1885 entered the office of Burnham &



Root in Chicago as a draftsman. In 1897, he formed a partnership with William K. Fellows, as described below. In 1898, Nimmons married Justine V. Wheeler, and the couple had three children. The partnership of Nimmons and Fellows lasted until 1910. From 1910 until 1917, Nimmons practiced privately as principal of George C. Nimmons & Co., and from 1920 until 1933 as principal of Nimmons & Co. His work in this period in Chicago included the Franklin Building (1912), the C.P. Kimball & Co. Building, the Reid, Murdoch & Co. Building (1913), and the Adams Schaaf Building (1916), and the Union Special Machines Company (1918). During the 1920s, his work in Chicago included the Kelley Building (1921) and the American Furniture Mart (1923, 1926). From 1933, Nimmons was senior partner in the firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright, with George W. Carr and Clark C. Wright, as described below. Nimmons retired in 1945, and died on June 17, 1947.<sup>2</sup>

During and after his tenure with Nimmons and Fellows, Nimmons published extensively, including articles on the design of several of the Sears, Roebuck buildings across the country. He was the author of a series of articles on "Modern Industrial Plants" in *The Architectural Record* in 1918 and 1919.<sup>3</sup> Nimmons also wrote essays on the future of concrete, and an introduction to a college textbook entitled "The Significance of the Fine Arts."<sup>4</sup>

- b. William Kinne Fellows, FAIA. William K. Fellows was born on September 3, 1870, in Winona, Minnesota, where he received his early education. Fellows studied at the Columbia University School of Mines and Architecture, and trained in architectural offices in New York City. He also studied for 18 months in Europe on a traveling fellowship. Fellows returned to the United States, where he settled in Chicago and established a firm with George C. Nimmons in which he practiced from 1897 until 1910, as described below. In 1898, Fellows married Elizabeth Steele. From 1911 until 1925, Fellows practiced with John L. Hamilton and Dwight Perkins in the firm Hamilton, Fellows & Perkins. This firm specialized in

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<sup>2</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), page 442.

<sup>3</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants," Part I, *The Architectural Record*, Volume 44, Number 5, November, 1918, pages 414-421; Part II, December 1918, page 531-550; Part III, January 1919, pages 27-44; Part IV, February 1919, pages 148-168; Part V, March 1919, pages 262-282; Part VIa, April 1919, pages 343-355; Part VIb, May 1919, pages 450-470; and Part VII, June 1919, pages 506-525. Part VII deals specifically with the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant in Chicago.

<sup>4</sup> George C. Nimmons, Introduction to *The Significance of the Fine Arts* (Committee on Education of the American Institute of Architects and the Committee on Architecture and Art of the Association of American Colleges, published by the Marshall James Company, 1923).

school architecture, and designed high schools at Bay City, Michigan (1918); Manitowoc, Wisconsin (1922); and Evanston, Illinois. Fellows also designed several buildings for University of Nanking in China. After 1925 and until retirement, Fellows practiced privately. He died on August 8, 1948.<sup>5</sup>

- c. The firm Nimmons and Fellows was established in 1897 and continued until 1910. Best known for large commercial structures, one of the firm's first major commissions of this type was the Sears & Roebuck plant on the West Side of Chicago. One of their most successful works, this work led to the firm's later receiving commissions to design buildings for Sears, Roebuck in several Midwestern cities in the early twentieth century.

Among the other major works by the firm in Chicago are the Bailey Building (south portion, 1898); the Leshner Building (1902), the Stratford Building (1907), the Arthur Dixon Building (1908), and the Railway Terminal Building (1909), as well as buildings for Sears, Roebuck and Company in Seattle, Washington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Kansas City, Missouri, among other locations. The firm also designed a residence for R.W. Sears residence in Grayslake, Illinois, in 1906,<sup>6</sup> and a residence for Julius Rosenwald in Chicago in 1903.<sup>7</sup>

After 1910, George C. Nimmons practiced as principal of George C. Nimmons & Co. (1911-1917) and Nimmons & Co. (1917-1928). He continued to design for the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant including additions to the Merchandise Building Annexes.

- d. The firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright, established in 1928, was the successor firm to Nimmons and Fellows, George C. Nimmons & Co., and Nimmons & Co. Nimmons, Carr & Wright was responsible for later construction at the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, including the Allstate Building (1949). Nimmons, Carr & Wright also designed buildings for Sears, Roebuck and Company at other locations, including the Sears, Roebuck and Company Building at Elliott and Lake Streets in St. Paul (1927), which is still extant.

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<sup>5</sup> Henry F. Withey, and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*, page 206.

<sup>6</sup> Richard W. Sears Residence, Grayslake, Illinois, *Inland Architect and News Record*, Volume 47, Number 6, July, 1906.

<sup>7</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), pages 55-56.

George Wallace Carr was born in 1879 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He studied design and engineering at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Armour Institute of Technology. After three years of travel and study abroad, Carr joined the firm of Pond & Pond in 1899. In 1914, Carr became associated with the firm of George C. Nimmons & Co., later Nimmons, Carr & Wright. Carr retired from the firm in 1949. He resided in Highland Park, Illinois, and died in 1958.<sup>8</sup>

Clark Chittenden Wright, AIA was born on July 3, 1880, in Libertyville, Illinois, and educated at Beloit College in Wisconsin. Like George Carr, he studied architecture and engineering at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. In 1915, Wright began his career as a draftsman in the office of George C. Nimmons in Chicago. By 1933, he became a partner in the firm of Nimmons, Carr & Wright. Wright was in charge of structural work on many large buildings including the Sears, Roebuck and Company buildings in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities; the Allstate Building at the Sears Mail Order Plant in Chicago; the Chicago Beach Hotel in Chicago; and the Portland Cement Company Research Laboratories in Skokie, Illinois.<sup>9</sup> Wright died on October 12, 1948.

After Nimmons' death in 1947, the firm continued as Carr and Wright, Inc., Architects-Engineers.

- e. Dunlap & Esgar, Inc. The firm was responsible for design of parking garages at the Mail Order Plant during the 1960s.

R. (Robert) Rea Esgar was born on August 24, 1905, in Bozeman, Montana. He was educated at Gallatin Co. High School in Bozeman, and attended Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa, for one year. Esgar received a B.S. in Architecture from Montana State College at Bozeman in 1927, and a M. Arch. degree from Harvard University in 1930. After working as a draftsman for the firm of Fred E. Wilson in Bozeman during college, he worked for Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott in Boston from 1929-1940 as a draftsman, and from 1944-1946 as an architect. Esgar also worked as architect and chief architect for Chas. T. Main, Inc., in Boston, from 1940-1944. Beginning in 1946, he was a principal with Nimmons, Carr & Wright (Carr & Wright) in Chicago. During that time, Carr & Wright had offices at 333 North Michigan Avenue.

Projects with which Esgar was involved while with Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott included Logan International Airport in

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<sup>8</sup> Obituary of George Wallace Carr, *The Chicago Tribune*, March 26, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*, page 672.

Boston; the Plant Pathology Building at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research at Princeton, New Jersey, New York Hospital and Cornell Medical Center in New York City; Lowell House, Elliot House, the Chapel, and various buildings at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the George Robert White Memorial Building for Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. While working at Chas. T. Main, Inc., during World War II, he served as Chief Architect for the Duck River Plant for the Chemical Warfare Service, constructed in Columbia, Tennessee; 30 residences at the Holston Ordnance Works at Kingsport, Tennessee; and various buildings at Camp McCain, Grenada, Mississippi. Esgar died on December 12, 1966.

Leonard Eugene Dunlap was born on April 15, 1893, in Savoy, Illinois. He was educated at Urbana High School, and graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign in 1917. Dunlap worked as a draftsman in Chicago for the Illinois Central Railroad from 1917 to 1919; for the Sinclair Oil Company Engineering Department in 1919; and for George C. Nimmons & Co. (Nimmons & Co.) from 1919 to 1921. From 1921 to 1927, he was in charge of the drafting department for the Kalman Steel Company, Distribution Engineering Department, in Chicago. In 1927, he rejoined the firm of Nimmons & Co. (Nimmons, Carr & Wright), where he listed his position as "in responsible charge of work." Dunlap remained associated with the firm after 1947, when it was reorganized as Carr and Wright, Inc., Architects-Engineers. Dunlap died in 1976.

Although local archives did not provide any definite evidence that Dunlap and Esgar was a successor firm to Nimmons, Carr & Wright, and Carr and Wright, Inc., it is likely that the connection existed because both Dunlap and Esgar held positions of responsibility with that firm by the late 1940s. It is of interest that from 1905, with the design of the original Mail Order Plant by Nimmons and Fellows, through the 1960s, with the design of several parking garages at the Mail Order Plant by Dunlap and Esgar, Sears, Roebuck and Company appears to have employed a single architectural firm and its successors.

### 3. The Engineers

#### a. Adams and Schwab (Martin C. Schwab)

Consulting engineering services for the Mail Order Plant were provided by the firm of Adams and Schwab of Baltimore, with the work continued by Martin C. Schwab, principal of the firm, after he moved to Chicago in 1905. Adams and Schwab provided the design for the elaborate conveyance systems of the Merchandise Building, and mechanical systems for the Power House and other buildings at the Mail Order Plant.

Martin Constan Schwab was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1880, and attended the local Polytechnic Institute. He graduated in engineering from Johns Hopkins University in 1896. In 1904, Schwab married Besse Wiesel and the couple had two daughters. In addition to his engineering work, Schwab was also nationally known as a collector of Chinese, Egyptian, and Persian art objects.

As a consulting engineer, Schwab assisted in the electrification of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1896. He was later appointed consulting engineer for the Maryland Electric Co., and was active in the rebuilding of Baltimore after the Fire of 1904. He served as consulting engineer for the Soldier's Home in Washington, D.C., and for buildings in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, while a principal in the firm of Adams and Schwab.

In 1905, Schwab moved to Chicago and established the firm of Martin C. Schwab. He served as consulting engineer for the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, where his work included the design of extensive conveyance systems for the Merchandise Building. To Schwab on this project are attributed the development of the first high speed and horizontal assembly lines, and the first use of air conditioning in an administration building with sealed windows.<sup>10</sup> He also participated in the design of the WLS Broadcasting Station at the Merchandise Building.

Schwab served as consulting engineer for the electrification of drainage canals in Chicago and for the Illinois State Board of Administration (1913). He was involved in construction of the Bell Building, Mallery Building, Michigan Square Building, Adler Planetarium, Harris Trust & Savings Building, Corn Exchange National Bank, Hotel Sherman, Morrison Hotel, Mandel Brothers Building, Rothschild's Store, Lytton Stores, 30 North Michigan Avenue, 333 North Michigan Avenue, and various Yellow Cab Bus properties in Chicago; the General American Tank Car Corporation in East Chicago, Indiana; Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri; and the Baumberger Department Store in Newark, New Jersey. He also served as consulting engineer for the Julia Lathrop Government Housing Project in Chicago. Schwab held patents for various devices developed for building construction. He was involved with construction of buildings in 150 cities in 43 states, and was active in various charitable organizations and clubs. Schwab died on January 2, 1947.

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<sup>10</sup> Obituary of Martin C. Schwab, *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 1947. This notice included a general description of Schwab's work; however, references to the names and locations of specific projects mentioned were not provided.

b. E.C. and R.N. Shankland

The firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland provided civil engineering services for the buildings of the original Mail Order Plant.

Edward Clapp Shankland was born on August 2, 1854, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was educated at public schools in Dubuque, Iowa, and studied civil engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, from which he graduated in 1878. (Edward Shankland received an honorary M.A. from Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, Iowa, in 1904.) In 1881, Edward Shankland married Harriet Graham; the couple had two children. From 1878 until 1883, Edward Shankland worked for the United States government on improvements to the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. From 1883 until 1889, he was engaged in structural work on bridges at Canton, Ohio. From 1889, he worked primarily in the design of steel structural systems for buildings, serving as an engineer for the firm of Burnham & Root (D.H. Burnham & Co.) until 1894. During the years 1891 through 1893, Edward Shankland was engineer of construction and chief engineer of the works for the World's Columbian Exposition. In 1898, he founded the firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland, Civil Engineers, with his brother, as discussed below. The firm specialized in designing steel structural systems for buildings. In 1896, Edward Shankland received the Telford gold medal and Telford premium from the Institute of Civil Engineers for his paper on steel skeleton construction in Chicago.

Ralph Martin Shankland was born on September 8, 1863, in Dubuque, Iowa. He studied civil engineering at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1888. In 1890, Ralph Shankland moved to Chicago, where he was employed in the engineering department of Burnham & Root (D.H. Burnham & Co.) until September, 1898. In 1894, Ralph Shankland married Justine M. McNeil, and the couple had one son. Beginning in 1898, he practiced civil engineering with his brother in the firm, E.C. and R.M. Shankland.

The firm of E.C. and R.M. Shankland was very well known for its work in Chicago and elsewhere. In addition to the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, the firm served as structural engineers for the Coliseum Building, LaSalle Street Station, an addition to the Fisher Building, and the Corn Exchange National Bank in Chicago, on which Martin Schwab had also worked; the Tennessee Trust Building in Memphis; the Union Bank Building in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and a palace for the Crown Prince of Japan in Toyko.

4. The Builders

- a. Thompson Starrett Company. The Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant was constructed by the Thompson Starrett Company of New York. Theodore Starrett (1864 - 1917), founder of the company, lived in Prospect Plain, New York. He came from a literary family; his mother was editor of a woman's magazine. However, with his brothers Paul and William, Theodore Starrett was always involved in building construction. In his youth, he worked in the offices of Burnham and Root, as had George C. Nimmons and Edward and Ralph Shankland. His work as a contractor included the erection of many large structures in Chicago, New York, and Toronto.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the Sears complex, work of the firm in Chicago included the Tribune Tower (1923 and 1925), and the Bismarck Hotel (1926), the Palmolive Building (1929).

5. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

The Merchandise Building was constructed for and has remained in use by Sears, Roebuck and Company. The building was used for handling and shipping of mail order merchandise from completion of construction in 1905 until closing in 1987.

6. Original Plans and Construction (1905-1910)

In a 1904 letter describing the proposed construction with regard to insurance requirements, Richard Sears described the proposed Mail Order Plant, including the Merchandise Building:

We have procured a piece of property about three miles directly west of our City Hall (Center of city). The property is 537 feet wide and one-half a mile long....in one of the best residence districts of our city....We are planning to erect a building of mill construction, the main part of the building covering an area of about 300 to 400 feet, with a large court in the center, and adjoining each building will be two long two-story buildings....<sup>12</sup>

The requirements for the new plant included a merchandise building where goods could be stored and shipped; an administration building; a printing plant; and various amenities including an outdoor recreation area. Julius Rosenwald personally negotiated with the architects and contractors for the

<sup>11</sup> Obituary of Theodore Starrett. *The Western Architect*, Volume 26, Number 5, November, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Richard Sears to Mr. Jno. A. Freeman, President of the Mutual Insurance Co. in Providence, Rhode Island, November 30(?), 1904.

new plant. He selected Nimmons and Fellows as the architects; the firm had designed his home at 4901 Ellis Avenue in Chicago in 1903, and had also designed a house for Richard Sears in Grayslake, Illinois.

When plans for the new plant were published in trade papers, Louis J. Horowitz of the Thompson-Starrett Company of New York traveled to Chicago to offer the firm's services. Horowitz offered a bid of \$250,000 for construction. He offered to sign a contract for a construction fee of only \$1; if Rosenwald was not satisfied with completed work, Sears, Roebuck and Company would only need to pay the cost of materials plus \$1. An agreement was finally drawn up for a fee of \$40,000, and the contract was signed on December 22, 1904.<sup>13</sup>

Ground was broken on January 24, 1905. Approximately 7,000 men worked on construction of the new plant. Each day 60 freight car loads of building materials were used. The contractor later reported that 23,000,000 bricks were used in construction. Several of the buildings were of mill construction. The order for yellow pine timber placed on January 11, 1905, was reportedly the largest in history of the trade, requiring 13,545,576 board feet of lumber.<sup>14</sup> The terra cotta for the buildings was fabricated by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Co., which had offices at 1000 Clybourn Avenue in Chicago in 1905.<sup>15</sup>

The Merchandise Building was completed by October, 1905. The entire plant was turned over to Sears, Roebuck on January 15, 1906, and on January 22, 1906, the company moved its operations to the new facility. The move from downtown Chicago to the new plant was made in approximately 200 wagons over a period of about one and one-half weeks. Merchandise was moved across the city, even as shipping continued uninterrupted at the offices. When the wagons arrived at the new plant, the adjacent streets were unpaved and few sidewalks had been constructed, but the Merchandise Building was ready for operations.<sup>16</sup>

When construction was completed, Rosenwald issued three checks, the first for the agreed sum of \$40,000, an additional fee of \$210,000 to cover actual costs, and a bonus of \$50,000 for the excellence of the work. The cost of

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<sup>13</sup> M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), page 70.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore Starrett, "The Making of a Great Mercantile Plant," *The Architectural Record*, Volume XIX, Number 4, April, 1906, page 272.

<sup>15</sup> Shop drawings in National Building Museum for terra cotta for "The Sears Warehouse, Chicago," by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company of Chicago, include drawings of units for sills, lintels, copings, cornices, the Tower balcony, anchorage details, and a key plan and elevations.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from R.P. Moffott to Julius Rosenwald, July 19, 1918.



construction was \$4,282,000; including equipment, the cost of construction of the new plant was \$5,600,000.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the Merchandise Building and its Annexes, the Administration Building, the Printing and Advertising Building, the Power House, and the Paint Factory were completed in the 1905-1906 building program. The adjacent park was developed soon after the buildings.

The Merchandise Building was one of the first buildings to be put in use at the new Mail Order Plant. Its nearly three million square feet of floor space, "made it the world's largest business building at the time."<sup>18</sup> The floor area of the main building was 1,232,419 square feet, with each of the two annexes providing an additional 513,183 square feet of space.<sup>19</sup> Approval had had to be obtained from the city to close a street to provide a continuous site, 1,250 feet (381 meters) long by 340 feet (104 meters) wide, for the new Merchandise Building site. The organization of the buildings at the plant permitted direct access for shipping from the Merchandise Building via the adjacent railroad line.

The special requirements of the Merchandise Building in large part governed the design. In an article explaining the process of design for the Mail Order Plant, the architects noted that in order to design the site and buildings for the greatest economy, efficiency, and safety, the buildings were organized into three groups based on three divisions of business: advertising and printing; administration; and merchandise storage, handling, and shipping.<sup>20</sup> Nimmons felt that the distinct processes of work should be organized in separate rooms or separate buildings. The flow of production should follow a direct path, without obstacles. The processes and work pattern of order handling determined the design of the Merchandise Building.

The goals of the design were to provide the best possible natural light, ventilation, and efficiency in handling goods to reduce cost while allowing for future growth. Accommodation had to be made for storage and handling of merchandise, communications between departments within and outside the building, and protection against fire.

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<sup>17</sup> Letter of August 2, 1939, to A.C. Roebuck at Sears from G.C. Nimmons at Nimmons, Carr & Wright. (See also Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 74.)

<sup>18</sup> Alex Groner, *The American Heritage History of American Business and Industry*, (New York, New York: 1972), page 242.

<sup>19</sup> "Notes & Comments: The Sears-Roebuck Building," *Architectural Record*, Volume 18, Number 8, August, 1905, page 167.

<sup>20</sup> [George C.] Nimmons and [William K.] Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," *The Architectural Record*, Volume XIX, Number 6, June, 1906, page 3.

The architects noted that:

The nature of the business is such that everything must be handled through one shipping room or endless complication results. Consequently, from numerous schemes the present scheme developed, giving two general divisions, the Merchandise Building and the Annexes...In the Merchandise Building is placed all of the small merchandise which goes through the shipping room. In the Annexes are housed the large or bulky articles which are shipped separately, or goods such as groceries, which are shipped in original packages.<sup>21</sup>

The large room where packing and shipping of completed orders would occur was a focus of the design.

The great problem about the planning of the Merchandise Building was to adapt a plan best suited for handling goods over this immense area, and at the same time one which would have the best light at the second story, as the second story is a continuous expanse of floor over the entire ground area. This is the shipping room floor where all goods are collected, packed, and shipped; the railroad tracks being elevated, enter the building at this level.<sup>22</sup>

The nature of the soil at the building site made spread foundations and wood piles impractical, and concrete piles could not be driven in the clay soil. It was finally decided to utilize concrete caissons, belled at the bottom, to support the new structures.

The floor construction was of five by eight yellow pine flooring, laid with splines, on 14 foot spans between girders without joists. The top of each floor was covered with saturated roofing felt and maple top flooring. In case of fire, water would drain to the outside wall and to scuppers, or to the stairs and elevator shafts. The windows in the court and skylight were fitted with wire glass and metal frames. All openings in fire walls had double fire doors.

Among the design considerations was the projected future elevation of railroad tracks to do away with grade crossings. For this reason, the receiving room was located at the existing grade, and the second floor shipping room was located 13 feet above existing grade, at the future elevated grade. The railroad depot had two sets of railway switches. Incoming freight arrived at the first floor level on the south side of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, page 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, page 404.

building, and outgoing freight was handled at the second floor level in the large freight depot.

From receiving areas on the first floor, goods were trucked to elevators located in the outside walls of the building, from which they could be transferred to the stock departments. The shelves of these departments were arranged so that goods were received at the outside and delivered toward the court in the shipping area, from which they were transferred to the shipping room at the second floor by spiral conveyors.<sup>23</sup> This permitted incoming and outgoing merchandise to be moved without crossing within the building. The operations of the Merchandise Building are described below.

The completed Merchandise Building, with its gravity chutes, conveyors, and railway system, was a source of pride for Sears, Roebuck and Company and its employees, as well as for the designers. Sears, Roebuck as well as Nimmons and Fellows published numerous articles about the design and operation of the plant, with descriptions such as the following:

Miles of railroad tracks lengthwise through, in and around this building for the receiving, moving and forwarding of merchandise, elevators, mechanical conveyors, endless chains, moving sidewalks, gravity chutes, apparatus and conveyors, pneumatic tubes and every known mechanical appliance for reducing labor, for the working out of economy and dispatch is to be utilized here in our great Works.<sup>24</sup>

#### 7. Alterations and Additions

The first additions to the Merchandise Building were made soon after completion of the original structure. In 1910, the fourth through ninth floors were added to Annex A, Sections J and K, and Annex B, Sections P and Q, comprising the upper stories of the west ends of each annex. This addition provided more merchandise storage and order handling area.

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<sup>23</sup> The spiral chutes were built by the Otis Elevator Company. A plate on the door of most of the spiral chutes at the site reads, "Gravity Package Conveyor, built by Otis Elevator Company, pat'd. June 10, 1902, May 19, 1903, New York, Chicago."

A plaque on the blower for the pneumatic tube system reads, "Manufactured specially for and installed by Lamson Consolidated Store Service Co., Lowell, Mass., Manufacturers of Pneumatic Tube Apparatus of Every Description." A second plaque on the blower reads, "Order No. 1508, built by the Cornersville Blower Co., Cornersville, Indiana, displacement per revolution, 188 cubic feet."

<sup>24</sup> Boris Emmet and John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), pages 132-133. The authors cite the 1905 Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogue.

In 1912, the two-story Box Factory was constructed at the west end of the Merchandise Building, adjacent to Annex B. This new area of the Merchandise Building permitted Sears, Roebuck and Company to manufacture its own boxes for use in shipping. The Grocery Building, consisting of a basement through sixth floor at Sections 11 and 12 of the Merchandise Building, was also constructed in 1912. Sears, Roebuck and Company had entered into mail order sales of groceries including grains, coffee, and other foodstuffs. The Grocery Department provided space for the special handling required for these goods, as well as cold storage facilities.

Between 1913 and 1916, another addition to the Merchandise Building Annexes was completed. This consisted of fourth through ninth floors at Sections R and S, at the west end of Annex B. Finally, in 1918, fourth through ninth floors were added at Annex A, Sections L, M, N, and O. These areas provided more merchandise storage space, and more room for handling and filling of orders.

Later alterations to the Merchandise Building and its Annexes consisted primarily of interior alterations by creation of offices through partition walls, and creation of finished space for the retail store at the northeast corner of the building. Various changes were made to the Shipping Court to accommodate variations in shipping and handling procedures.

Minor exterior changes were made to the loading docks and adjacent entrances. In 1959, granite cladding was added at the lower floors on the east elevation and northeast corner, and the main (east) entrance was modified to its present appearance.

## B. History of Operations

### 1. 1905-1910

A "schedule system" for handling orders was developed by operations superintendent Otto C. Doering and his associates. Doering was extremely interested in improving the efficiency of the company's operations. In fact, during construction of the new plant, Doering had developed a system to assure that enough bricks would be available at any time for the bricklayers. He had coordinated the flow of materials for construction, as well as creating a system that provided a daily progress report.<sup>25</sup>

The schedule system was first tried some time between 1906 and 1908, soon after the company moved into its new buildings. The goal of the system was to make it possible to fill and ship all orders within 24 to 48 hours of receipt. For a single order, shipment would typically occur the same day as the order was received. For a mixed order, shipment would occur the following day.

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<sup>25</sup> Emmett and Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, page 135.

The schedule system was actually a timetable. As each order was received, it was assigned a fifteen minute period of an hour, usually within the 48 hours after receipt of the order, in which it would be shipped. The assigned period was stamped on the order, or on every component ticket of a mixed order. The merchandise required to fill that order was delivered by each department to an assigned bin in the shipping division within the designated 15 minute period. At the end of the assigned 15 minute interval, the order was shipped. If any order was incomplete, the department that had not met deadline was penalized by the express cost plus a penalty, charged against the department's profits. A different colored form was used for each day of the week, so that urgent items could be readily identified. Through filing and shipping, the schedule system consisted of more than 25 steps for each order, as described below.

Although there is no specific evidence that Doering or others at Sears had direct contact with Frederick W. Taylor, the "Father of Scientific Management," the schedule system suggests a familiarity with the methods of the emerging scientific management movement.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the schedule system, Doering set up a methods department for continued improvement of the company operations.

The first mail delivery reached the Mail Order Plant at 6 a.m. The mail was weighed, and based on the amount of mail received, the early work shift prepared estimates for department heads of the approximate anticipated workload for the day. Typically one pound of mail could be expected to contain 40 orders.<sup>27</sup> Including the early delivery, mail was delivered to the plant four times daily.

The majority of the work force arrived at 8 a.m. Sears, Roebuck and Company invented the first automatic letter openers used in the industry, and letters were opened at a rate of 10 to 12,000 per hour.<sup>28</sup> Orders were separated from other correspondence, and then read and checked in the Auditing Department.

Orders were then delivered to the Cash Crediting Division, where payments were checked before the orders were accepted for processing. The amount of money received was recorded on the face of the original order and a record made. The orders were then passed to the Card Index Department where a second record was made as a permanent record of the transaction, indicating the invoice number, location by state, and amount received. The

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<sup>26</sup> James Worthy, *Shaping an American Institute: Robert E. Wood and Sears, Roebuck*, page 30.

<sup>27</sup> Emmett and Jueck, *Catalogs and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company*, page 135.

<sup>28</sup> Sears had invented the first automatic letter openers used in industry. According to Werner, these machines could open 27,000 letters per hour. (Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian*, page 73.)

orders were then sent to the Entry Department. By 1908, \$350,000 in orders was received each day.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the departments responsible for entering and processing orders, the Mail Order Plant had a General Correspondence Department which was responsible for answering letters from customers. Its annex, the Adjustment Inspection Department, was responsible for determining responses and refunds to customer complaints. In the Stenographic Department, 150 to 200 women transcribed letters dictated by correspondents in person, or dictated onto graphophone cylinders. This worked produced 10,000 letters per day including carbon copies.<sup>30</sup>

The accounting division of the Cashier's Department was responsible for counting money received. Each day, 25,000 post office money orders, 3,300 express money orders, 5,000 checks, and thousands of dollars in currency were received. This department also handled payroll for employees, and the accounts of the Employees' (sic) Savings Bank.<sup>31</sup>

In the Entry Division, more than 60,000 orders were prepared each day, with 300 typewriters used to record orders.<sup>32</sup> Each order was checked for proper catalogue numbers and description of goods, and to see that the correct payment was enclosed. Initially, the original orders were saved. Later, the original copies were sent back to customers so that they could check the orders against the goods received.

In the Routing Department, the shortest, fastest, and cheapest route was selected for shipping each order. Labels were prepared and other clerical work for shipping was completed. A ticket for each item in the order was then made out and sent to the appropriate merchandise department via

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<sup>29</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "Mail Opening and Mail Auditing Departments," circa 1908. Around 1908, Sears, Roebuck and Company produced a set of 50 stereo views which were made available to customers for 50 cents a set. These stereopticon slides featured overall views of the Mail Order Plant and employees at work. Views included the Administration Building and gardens, Mr. Sears at his desk, receptionists at the Long Distance Telephone Switchboard, the Automatic Telephone Switchboard in basement of Administration Building, a Pneumatic Tube Station, the main dining room in the basement of Administration Building.

<sup>30</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "Stenographic Department," circa 1908.

<sup>31</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "Counting the Money Received Daily," circa 1908.

<sup>32</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "Making a Record of the Customer's Order," circa 1908.

pneumatic tube. Each of the dozens of tubes could deliver 20 carriers per minute.<sup>33</sup>

The pneumatic tubes were a source of fascination for visitors, and provided the focus for various promotional documents:

Probably the most valuable time saver employed by us to facilitate the transaction of business in the new plant is very elaborate system of pneumatic tubes used for sending written communications, orders, etc. between departments throughout the several buildings....the station in the Administration Building is said to be the largest of its kind in the world. More than fifteen miles of tubing were used in the installation of this system...Letters and orders received from our customers are opened and read in the Administration Building and from this central building are routed through this tube station to the proper merchandise or clerical departments for handling, and as this service is operated by compressed air it is almost instantaneous. These tubes carry what they call a cartridge, which is a hollow cylinder about four inches in diameter and about twelve inches long. Letters, orders or papers are inserted in this cartridge and the cartridge in turn dropped into the tube and the great air pressure forces this carrier at a very high rate of speed to its destination...It is not an uncommon thing for the boys in charge of this room to handle more than twenty-seven thousand cartridges in the course of a day's work, and in the entire tube system more than seventy thousand cartridges or carriers are handled in a single day.<sup>34</sup>

The orders were received in the various merchandise departments. Merchandise was stored on numbered shelves according to the catalogue numbers. The correct items for each order were selected and placed in baskets. The baskets were placed in gravity conveyors and conveyor belts which carried the merchandise to assembly points. The baskets were then dropped through chutes which carried them to the shipping rooms. The chutes were constructed of steel, and were about eight feet in diameter. Each chute contained three spiral planes, with one opening to each chute at each story of the building. Baskets containing goods were placed in one of three openings, which corresponded to freight, express, or mail shipment.

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<sup>33</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "The Routing Department," circa 1908.

<sup>34</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company Archives, stereopticon slide, "Pneumatic Tube Station, Sears, Roebuck & Co., Chicago, Ill.," circa 1908.



A contemporary review noted, "This process is very rapid, and goods are disposed of about as fast as if they were through out of the window."<sup>35</sup>

At the bottom of the chutes, the baskets slid onto horizontal conveyors which ran around four sides of large shipping court. Each plane of the chute connected at the bottom with a corresponding traveling conveyor for mail, express, or freight shipping departments. The conveyors transported the goods to the proper shipping room. The mail shipping area was 12,000 square feet in floor area, and the express and freight shipping areas were each 25,000 square feet.

Smaller goods, including all items less than 4 feet x 5 feet in size, were sent by the spiral chutes. These goods were stored in the merchandise departments located above the second floor, while larger and heavier goods were stored on or below the second floor level. Heavier goods stored below the second story were carried up into the shipping area by inclined traveling conveyors. In addition, each merchandise department had access to at least one large freight elevators.

The baskets containing goods were received from the conveyors onto a large receiving table in each shipping room. The baskets were then taken to rows of shelves divided into sections, with a space reserved for each order. Empty boxes were brought in to the packing area overhead at the center of court, by traveling conveyor. As soon as the last article required to fill the order reached the basket, the goods were checked, boxed, and marked ready for shipment. The packing process was organized so that shipments were completed near the head of the large freight depot.

Conveyors carried the packed orders to the loading platforms. Heavier items were taken to freight and express areas, and lighter items were taken to desks where pre-canceled stamps were attached. Heavy goods too large to be boxed were assembled in the freight pits and moved into railroad cars. Very heavy items were shipped directly from the factory. Orders for such items were forwarded to the factory for handling and shipping on a similar schedule system.

## 2. 1910-1930

Over the first several decades of operations at the Mail Order Plant, the schedule system did not change very much. Some refinement of the system as implemented to address the increasing volume of business. An article written in 1919 followed the course of an order received at the Mail Order Plant, as described below:

When a letter arrives in the Administration Building, it is opened, together with others, by grinding its edge on a machine. Its contents are divided, the remittance going one

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<sup>35</sup> Nimmons and Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," page 406.

way after auditing and the order going to a clerk, who enters a record of it and then makes out a separate ticket for each department handling the goods called for by the order. These tickets, to which are attached the shipping labels or freight or express receipts, are then sent from the Administration Building through pneumatic tubes over to the proper departments in the Merchandise Building.....<sup>36</sup>

By 1918, 1,500 to 3,000 pounds of mail, i.e., 90,000 to 180,000 letters, were received each day.<sup>37</sup>

The mail was sorted in sorting racks. Regular mail was opened by a machine, and stamped with the time received at a rate of 450 letters per minute. At first, letters were opened by hand. Then, an automatic letter opener with a two-foot disc faced with sandpaper was used by grind letters open in bunches of 40 to 50. This was found to damage the letters, so a new machine was developed to open one letter at a time.

In the Mail Opening Division, 50 girls aged 16 or 17 removed enclosures and pinned them to the envelopes. Orders were separated from correspondence, and orders containing currency were separated from the rest.

Orders were collected from the Mail Opening Division and delivered to the Cash Entry Division, where they were sorted according to the type of payment enclosed. The 55 cash entry clerks worked at stations along two conveyor belts. Each clerk received a bundle of 25 orders and 25 wrappers. After the contents were checked, the amount of credit was marked in blue pencil on the face of the order. Orders and remittances were then placed on the belt to be taken to the cashier's office and auditing department, to balance the money received against the credit noted. Orders were then sent to other departments for handling and shipping. Sears, Roebuck and Company accepted personal checks without certification, and realized only small losses.

Letters were collected from the mail openers and taken to the mail reading division. The various departments were numbered, and the readers designated to which department letters were to be sent for answering. A colored schedule sheet was pinned to the front of each letter indicating the department to which it was to be sent. Letters were dispatched from the mail reading division every 30 minutes. A different color sheet was used for

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<sup>36</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants: Part VII - Sears, Roebuck & Co.'s Plant, Chicago," *The Architectural Record*, June 1919, page 512.

<sup>37</sup> "A Visit to Sears, Roebuck & Co.," (Chicago, Illinois: Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1918).

each day of week. The correspondents were allowed about 6-3/4 hours after opening of the letter to prepare an answer.<sup>38</sup>

Goods were received on the south side of the Merchandise Building, at the first and second floors, and sorted according to merchandise type. The merchandise was then moved horizontally to the different sections of the warehouse, and transferred to elevator to the appropriate merchandise departments on the floors above. In the Merchandise Building:

...the goods called for are selected, checked and wrapped, with the tickets to identify them attached. Each ticket calling for goods always has marked on it the particular time at which the articles called for are to arrive down in the shipping room on the second floor...the article or package of goods is placed on a traveling belt conveyor, which takes the articles along to a great steel spiral chute, about eight feet in diameter, that extends on down to the sorting division on the third floor.

The process described above addresses only one spiral chute; by 1919 there were actually seven at different locations within the Merchandise Building. Five of the six chutes had three internal planes, so that three separate streams of goods could travel through the chutes at one time.

Items that were too large to be sent through the spiral chutes were stored in the Merchandise Building annexes, taken down on trucks by elevators, and loaded into cars in the freight depot. After the smaller goods were placed in the spiral chute:

The goods come down this chute and slide out on another belt conveyor, which carries them along to the sorting division. Here are many clerks, and traveling belt conveyors apparently moving in every direction. When the package which we have been following arrives before a certain clerk, he takes it off the incoming belt and places it on the belt which is headed in the direction of the particular section of the shipping department where our package is to be packed. When it arrives at this section it is placed in a basket on a rack, where it waits till all the other articles ordered by our customer have arrived. When the last article has arrived in the basket to complete the order, the basket is taken out of the rack and placed on a declining gravity slide on which it slides down from this balcony elevation to the packer.

The packer takes the goods out of the basket, puts them on the counter in front of him, and immediately decides what

kind and size of a box he will pack them in. He calls out a number indicating this, and someone up above hands him down the box of his choice. After the goods are boxed and labeled they are placed on another belt, which takes them away for shipment. The package may be shipped by freight, mail or express; if by parcel post the package is weighed, stamped and conveyed to a bin where other packages going to the same locality are accumulated to be sent over the same railroad or route.<sup>39</sup>

After completion of the two-story Box Factory adjacent to the west of Annex B in 1912, boxes for shipping could be manufactured on-site at the Merchandise Building. In the same year, completion of the six-story Grocery Building at the west end of Annex B provided seven acres of floor space with special heating, cooling, and ventilation systems, and areas for storage of foods at different temperatures. In the Grocery Stock Room, packaging of cereals, sugar, and coffees was accomplished, "untouched by human hands." By the late 1910s, 6,000 carloads of groceries were shipped each year. Sears, Roebuck and Company handled the Montclair, Rivera, and Kingston brands of groceries.

By 1918, all shipments were made one to two hours after receipt in the Shipping Department from the Stockroom. The Shipping Department was 200,000 square feet in size, and 1,500 to 2,000 employees worked there. In 1917, the department reportedly sent 22,000,000 orders.<sup>40</sup>

A post office was located at the north side of the Merchandise Building, (in Section I, on the first floor). The post office business done there was considered the equivalent of that of a city of 150,000 persons. The express companies also had representatives at the site, with offices on the first floor of the Merchandise Building (Sections A and E).

Beginning in 1912, Sears, Roebuck also used warehouses at other locations for storage. By 1918, 15 warehouses were in use, providing a storage area of 1,500,000 square feet.<sup>41</sup>

All outgoing movement of goods took place from the center of the buildings outward, to avoid interference with incoming supplies. All of the railroad tracks on which incoming goods arrived were located on the outside of the building. By 1918, motor-trucks were primarily used for hauling of goods instead of horse-drawn wagons. Outgoing orders were loaded directly into freight cars. Express orders were shipped by truck. Wagon and truck

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<sup>39</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants: Part VII - Sears, Roebuck & Co.'s Plant, Chicago," page 512.

<sup>40</sup> Description of Mail Order Procedure, by R.J. Blum, July 10, 1918.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from R.P. Moffott to Julius Mr. Rosenwald, July 19, 1918.

loading areas were located on the east, north, and west sides of the building.

3. 1930-1987

Receiving and shipping of goods was by railroad until the 1930s, when rail was supplanted by truck for both incoming and outgoing goods. As in previous years, goods were transported by hydraulic elevator to the various Merchandise Storage areas on the third through ninth floors. Storage for heavier and larger goods was provided on the first and second floors. Additional storage was provided in the basement. Goods were placed on shelves according to catalogue number. As in the original order handling system, orders were received via pneumatic tube from the Administration Building to the two pneumatic tube stations in the Merchandise Building basement. Orders were then sent by tube to the merchandise departments above. Orders were filled according to the method of shipment (mail, express, or freight), and packed in the shipping court and adjacent areas. Completed orders were shipped by mail from the post office docks on the first floor, Section I; by railroad express service from the first floor, Section A; or by freight from the train shed between Annex A and Annex B. The post office service continued until the 1970s, after which orders were instead shipped by United Parcel Service (UPS).

The process for order handling and shipping did not change very much over the years. A letter prepared by an employee in 1938 documented changes that had occurred, reflecting a system very similar to that implemented decades earlier. In the late 1930s, the mail was received each hour from 5:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. After preliminary sorting, the mail containing orders was sent through a mail operating machine. Mail containing currency was distributed to cash entry clerks in batches of 25 orders. Other orders were distributed in one pound lots. The clerks pinned a cash wrapper and shipping label to each order containing remittance. Other orders and correspondence were redirected for special handling. Orders containing remittance other than currency were picked up at intervals by messengers and delivered to cash register operators. Orders containing currency were accumulated by cash entry clerks and released to the cash registers in packets of 25. After authentication, the packets were released to "Department 173" for verification.<sup>42</sup>

In later years, the Grocery Building and the Box Factory at the west end of Annex A were used for shipping of orders. Truck docks were added to the north side of Annex B, as well as the Grocery Building, Box Factory, and Annex A. From the mid-1960s, orders were transferred to the Catalogue Operations Building, located one block west of the Merchandise Building, for shipment by truck.

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<sup>42</sup> Letter from B.W. Thomas to Mr. Lusby on Mail Order Procedures, updating C.W. Palmer letter, re: Department 146, February 28, 1938.

When the Merchandise Building closed in 1987, the system in use dated from the mid-1960s. System components such as the spiral chutes and pneumatic tubes were part of the original installation circa 1906 to 1917. Other components such as conveyor belts in the merchandise storage areas were installed after original construction, and remained in use with some alterations. Although shipping methods changed over the years, the organization of the system for filling orders remained similar to that originally used. In 1987, orders were designated and shipped according to three methods: Single, Mixed, and Control Delivery Service (CDS) orders. Single and Mixed orders were shipped directly to the customers by parcel post, and later by UPS. The CDS orders were shipped to retail and catalogue stores for pickup by customers. Beginning in the mid-1960s, all orders were moved by conveyor from the Merchandise Building to the Catalogue Operations Building. At the Catalogue Operations Building, orders were loaded onto trucks for shipment.

At the time of the Plant closing in 1987, single orders, mixed orders, and CDS orders were processed as follows. For single orders, the order picker located the item on shelves where it was stored according to catalogue number. (A ticket for each order was received via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station in the basement of the Merchandise Building.) The single item was packaged and placed on a conveyor leading to a spiral chute, single order vane. The single item was received from the spiral chute and traveled on the conveyor to a processing station. The single item order was received in Section I on the first floor for labeling and weighing. It was then forwarded by conveyor to Catalogue Operations Building for shipment.

For mixed orders, the order picker in a given merchandise department located the items held in that department on shelves where items were arranged by catalogue order. (One ticket for each item was previously received in the merchandise departments via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station.) Circa 1987, orders were required to be filled and sent by spiral chute and conveyor to the package station within 20 minutes, so that all order items of a mixed order could be packaged together. The mixed order items were then placed on conveyor to a spiral chute, mixed order vane. The mixed order items were received from the spiral chute and sent by conveyor to a sorting station. Mixed order items were received in the sorting station, with the size of the order determining whether the order was packaged in Section A (normal orders) or Section B (large orders). Mixed orders were transferred to one of six "crow's nest" substation conveyors. At each "crow's nest," personnel sorted the orders to one of eight package stations. All mixed order items for a given customer were packaged together and placed on a conveyor. Larger mixed orders were handled separately by a similar system, traveling first to the sorting level, sorted to bins according to designated time of packaging, and finally packaged together and placed on conveyor. All completed and packaged mixed orders were then sent by conveyor to the Catalogue Operations Building for shipment.

For CDS orders, the order picker located the item or items on shelves, where items were organized by catalogue number. (One ticket for each item was previously received via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station.) Order items were placed on a conveyor leading to a spiral chute, where they were placed in the CDS order vane. CDS order items received from spiral chute traveled on a conveyor to a sorting station, passing by a supervisor who controlled distribution to either side of the sorting station. CDS orders were then sorted by store region to one of eight conveyors carrying merchandise to each sorting substation. Substation personnel sorted the merchandise to bins; one or more bins were provided for each store. CDS merchandise was retrieved from bins and placed in boxes on a conveyor which carried the completed orders to the Catalogue Operations Building for shipment. Order items for each customer were later sorted at the stores.

This system of operations remained in use until the Merchandise Building closed in 1987. The decline in catalogue sales in comparison to retail sales, the opening of other Sears facilities across the country by mid-century, and the relocation of the company's headquarters to downtown Chicago all contributed to a lessening of importance of the Mail Order Plant. In 1987, the Merchandise Building closed, and the mail order portion of the business at the Chicago Plant ended.



## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

#### 1. Architectural character

The Merchandise Building is an excellent example of the architectural style developed by Nimmons and Fellows for their practice in industrial buildings. The red brick walls, simple trim, and regular and extensive fenestration all exemplify the type of solution which the firm developed to meet the needs of the workers while responding to an architectural aesthetic.

In an article written in 1919 explaining the design, Nimmons and Fellows commented:

Modern industrial buildings are particularly fitting subjects for treatment architecturally. The varied requirements and function of these structures are such as can be expressed in designs that are both attractive and beautiful...many designers of these buildings are beginning to indicate a preference for a certain kind of treatment...an honest expression of the construction or functions of the building, because the utilitarian nature of industrial buildings, as a rule, prevents the expenditure of much money on elaborate features of a purely ornate character....In fact, what a proper architectural treatment is for a factory building would clearly show that it is simply making beautiful and attractive what has to be there anyhow for utilitarian purposes.<sup>43</sup>

The architects also noted that the goal of this design was to obtain the greatest efficiency while maintaining economy of space and cost. They noted that "the composition was made subservient to structural requirements and such structural features developed to provide a pleasing composition."<sup>44</sup>

#### 2. Condition of fabric

At this writing, the Merchandise Building is scheduled for demolition. In general, the Merchandise Building is in fair to good condition. Although the building is scheduled for demolition, it has generally been well maintained. However, portions of the building are only in fair condition, with localized deterioration of exterior masonry, roofing, and interior finishes from water penetration. A localized structural failure of a timber roof beam has

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<sup>43</sup> George C. Nimmons, "Modern Industrial Plants: Part IV - Discussion of the Various Types of Windows for Industrial Buildings," *The Architectural Record*, February 1919, pages 163 and 165.

<sup>44</sup> Nimmons and Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," page 411.

occurred at the ninth floor, Section D, due to rotting of the wood from water penetration. The bridge leading from the west elevation of the Grocery Building to the Property Building (demolished) was removed, and the area of masonry opening to the bridge at the Grocery Building is deteriorated.

**B. Description of Exterior:**

**1. Overall dimensions**

The Merchandise Building is composed of two parts: a nine-story east portion organized around a central court, and two nine-story wings (Annexes A and B) to the west. The six-story Grocery Building (Sections 11 and 12) is located at the west end of Annex B, and the two-story Box Factory is directly south of the west end of the Grocery Building. The overall footprint of the building is an extended U. The overall dimensions of the east portion of the building (Sections A through I) are 450 feet (137 meters) by 312 feet (95 meters), with the central shipping court measuring 230 feet (70 meters) by 81 feet (25 meters). The tower is 50 feet (15 meters) square in plan. Annex A, the south annex, is 706 feet (215 meters) by 115 feet (35 meters) in plan. Annex B, the north annex, is 462 feet (141 meters) by 115 feet (35 meters) in plan. At the west end of Annex B, the Grocery Building is 327 feet (100 meters) by 130 feet (40 meters) in plan, and the Box Factory is 235 feet (72 meters) by 85 feet (26 meters) in plan. The train shed between Annex A and Annex B is 68 feet (20 meters) by 464 feet (141 meters) in plan and contains four tracks. The main facade of the building faces east.

**2. Foundations**

The building is constructed on concrete caissons, belled at the bottom. Some of the caissons reportedly extend 90 feet (27 meters) into the ground. Below grade, the basement walls are constructed of concrete.

**3. Walls (including Tower)**

The exterior walls of the building and Tower are red pressed brick with terra cotta trim. Terra cotta trim at floors three through nine consists of window heads and sills. At some locations, the original terra cotta units have been removed and sheet metal covers installed. Above the eighth and ninth floors are located projecting courses of terra cotta. Continuous brick piers extend from floors three through eight. A terra cotta cap surmounts each brick pier. Brick corbels are located above the third floor windows. The sills at the first and second floors are limestone. A decorative limestone course is located above the second floor on the exterior facades. This trim is similar on the exterior facades of the building and Annexes.

The facades facing the courtyard and train shed are red face brick and common brick, with red terra cotta sills and lintels, and a terra cotta coping.

Some of the sills and lintels are concrete. In both the exterior and courtyard walls, the brickwork has a header course every six courses.

A newer granite base is located along the east facade at the first and second floor levels. This cladding extends around the corner of the building onto the north elevation.

The base of the Tower at the first and second floors is clad with limestone. The shaft of the Tower is organized with three columns of windows between brick piers. At each corner, the wall is brick with a terra cotta course above the second floor and at the first floor sills. There are capitals above the piers at the top of the second story. The top floor of the Tower is decorated with blue and white terra cotta surrounding the three arched openings on each facade. The nine balconies at the observation deck level are clad with a sheet metal surround that is not original. The exterior terra cotta at this level has been painted. The original exterior light fixtures have been removed at this level.

The main entry is located on the east elevation, at the base of the tower. The entry is flanked by two large, smooth limestone columns, and is surmounted by a canopy, all installed in 1959. (The original columns were fluted.) The large limestone bracket above the doors is part of the original entry. Entrance is through a modern glass and aluminum doorway.

There are four secondary public entrances near the east end of the north facade. At the east end of the facade, an aluminum and glass entrance is surmounted by a metal canopy. This entrance led to the bank. The next entrance to the west led to the retail store. The main retail store entrance, which is surmounted by a metal canopy, is flanked by two smaller entrances for exit stairs, each surrounded by terra cotta trim. The entry area of the main retail store entrance has been bricked in. Each of these entrances is flanked by two pilasters and topped by an entablature.

Several employee entrances are also located on the north elevation. The entrance at the west end near the Grocery Building and the entrance near the middle of the north elevation are original, with wood doors and a transom. The entrance at the east end of Annex B has aluminum-framed windows with a brick base. At the base of each fire stairs there are wood doors with a transom above.

Fire escapes are located at regular intervals along all exterior elevations of the building. There are also interior fire stairs between each pair of bays.

There are three sets of loading docks along the north elevation. The easternmost dock is covered by a canopy of ribbed metal, and consists of four rolling doors surmounted by transoms. This dock is original to 1905, and served as Postal Service Shipping. The center dock has non-original doors with transoms above. There is a metal canopy above the loading dock. The west dock is covered by metal awnings. This loading doors at this dock have been modified.

A loading platform is located along the east elevation, south of the Tower. This platform is covered by a ribbed metal canopy. An addition at the east end of the south elevation of building housed the Express Offices.

There is also a loading dock at the Grocery Building, at the west end of Annex B. This dock has four roll-up doors.

At the north facade of the Grocery Building, brick piers continue from the base of the wall to the top of the fifth floor, and are surmounted by terra cotta capitals. Short paired piers are located at the sixth floor level. A brick gable with terra cotta trim extends above each end and the center of the Grocery Building, north elevation. The brickwork and terra cotta trim are similar on the west elevation, and also include terra cotta trim in the bay containing the fire stair and entrance.

The main entrance to the Grocery Building is located at the center of the north facade. There is a secondary entrance to the Grocery Building at the south end of the west elevation. One fire escape is located at the center of the west facade of the Grocery Building.

The Box Factory is located at the west end of the Merchandise Building, south of the Grocery Building and adjacent to the larger building. The Box Factory is also constructed with red brick exterior walls on the west and part of the south facades. The first floor contains loading docks covered by a metal awning on the west elevation and recessed beneath the second floor on the south elevation. The second story wall extends into a gable at the north end. The Box Factory west wall is ornamented with two terra cotta belt courses at the second floor window level, as well as terra cotta copings and sills. This portion of the facade has one-over-one double-hung wood-framed windows.

A metal-clad addition has been constructed at the second story of the Box Factory, above the south loading platform. The remainder of the south elevation consists of a curved wall constructed of clay tiles, with regular paired window openings between projecting clay tile piers. This portion of the Box Factory facade is covered by a metal canopy. Directly east of the Box Factory, a metal canopy covers the first floor of the south facade of the Grocery Building.

On the south side of Annex A, a steel railroad trestle extends along the length of the building at the second floor level. There are exits at the fire stairs at regular intervals along this facade. A small one-story red brick addition was constructed at the west end of Annex A.

A wood-framed walkway extends between the north facade of Annex A and the south side of the Box Factory at the second story level. A metal-clad walkway connected the west end of the north facade of Annex A with the Catalogue Operations Building (demolished). A third walkway that linked that west end of the Grocery Building with the Property Building has been demolished. Finally, a metal-clad walkway extends from the east end of the

south facade of Annex A to the Paint Factory (Wall Paper Mill) at the second story level.

4. Structural system, framing

With the exception of the Tower, the Merchandise Building is principally mill construction consisting of timber framing. Mill construction was used for the east portion of the building, Sections A through I; Annex A, Sections J, K, L, and M; Annex A, Sections N and O (with the exception of the top two floors which are steel and tile construction); Annex B, Sections P and Q; and Annex B, Sections R and S (with the exception of the top two stories which are steel and tile construction). The columns of Sections A through S are cast iron with plaster fireproofing encasement at the basement, first, and second floors. (Other exceptions to mill construction are noted below.)

The floor construction is of five by eight yellow pine flooring, laid with splines, on 14 foot spans between girders without joists. The top of each floor is covered with saturated roofing felt and maple top flooring. The overall floor thickness is six inches. The architects noted that, "The amount of lumber usually put in floor joist is added to the thickness of the ordinary mill flooring, making the floors strong enough to span from one girder to the other without the need of joists."<sup>45</sup> This provided additional head room, a smooth ceiling surface, and room for the sprinklers, air ducts, and pneumatic tubes.

The Tower is bearing wall construction of brick masonry. Interior partition walls in the Tower are clay tile. The Tower roof is steel truss framing with shallow-arched clay tile.

Each fire stair within the main portion of the building and the Annexes is enclosed by brick walls. Stairways, elevators, heating and ventilating ducts, dust chutes, and wire shafts are all constructed with brick walls.

The Box Factory at the west end of Annex B has a concrete structural system, and steel and clay tile roof construction. The basement floor is concrete. The Grocery Building also has a concrete structural system and brick exterior walls.

The train shed and Shipping Court roofs are supported by steel trusses.

The tunnels that extend beneath the basement and the train shed, between Annex A and Annex B, are constructed of concrete that extends to the brick walls of the building. The tunnel ceilings are constructed of steel pan and concrete.

Modifications have been made to the interior structural systems to accommodate the addition of mezzanine levels. In the train shed area, the

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<sup>45</sup> Nimmons and Fellows, "Designing a Great Mercantile Plant," page 408.

tracks were filled in and a floor was added at the second level during the 1940s or 1950s. In Section C of Annex A, a mezzanine level has been added. The columns in this area are timber, and are surrounded by encasements. In Section D, a mezzanine level has also been added. At the second floor, below the center of the courtyard at the east end of the building, the area most recently used for regional sorting of CDS orders has a mezzanine level along the center of the room. This area is wood frame construction with steel columns that extend to support mezzanine. Some of the steel members extend to the steel truss above. In the Shipping Court, a wood stairway extends through the mezzanine level at the center of the space. Stairs and catwalks are located throughout this area. The three bays at the east portion of the Shipping Court were altered circa 1905-1915. The remaining portion of the courtyard retains its original steel truss. The mezzanine extends through the space of the truss.

5. Doors and windows

The main entrance and several of the secondary entrances to the Merchandise Building are non-original, aluminum and glass curtain wall systems with swinging doors, fixed transoms, and fixed sidelights. The entrance to the Grocery Building consists of two sets of metal swing double doors that have been boarded over. Other secondary entrances contain metal and wood doors. Many of the door and windows openings on the first through third floors have been boarded over since the building closed in 1987.

The exterior walls on the outside facades have wood-framed double-hung windows with clear glass. The exterior walls on the courtyard facades have metal-framed wire glass windows. The upper portions of the windows are inward-acting awning units which operate on chains.

At Sections L, M, N, and O, at the fourth through ninth floors, a different type of window unit was used. In each bay there are two sets of metal-framed, wire glass windows. Each set consists of 20 windows, five across by four high. The center six units in each group are outward-opening awning windows.

There are double-hung wood windows covered by wire cages above the rolling shutters, on the south facade adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The windows in the Tower stairwell are double-hung, steel-framed units with wire glass. Windows in the Box Factory are metal-framed units with wire glass on the south facade, and wood-framed, double-hung units with clear glass on the west facade.

In Sections R and S, doors containing a wire glass window and two-part wire glass transoms lead onto the fire escapes. The windows adjacent to the fire doors are wire glass. In all other areas, entrance to the fire escapes is through a wire glass window.

The fire escapes are metal with a metal ladder leading from the roof.

6. **Roof**

The Merchandise Building has a flat roof with an inverted roof membrane system covered by ballast. The roof slopes to drains in the center bay of each section, and is penetrated by vents and stacks. There are several simple brick penthouses with terra cotta copings on the main roof. The roofs over the Merchandise Departments in the Annexes are monitor configuration and contain skylights. The skylights have been roofed over since circa 1950.

The Tower has a steep hipped roof covered with red clay tile. The clay tile was installed to replace the original clay tile roofing in the 1980s.

The train shed roof was originally glazed, and has been covered with a painted sheet roofing over a roofing membrane. A series of vents is located along the ridge of this roof.

The stair tower between Sections P and Q was originally lighted by a skylight above the stair tower. The skylight has been covered over. There were also originally skylights over the stair towers between Sections A and B, C and D, J and K, P and Q, and R and S.

C. **Description of Interior:**

1. **Floor plans**

The building consists of a rectangular east block organized around an interior courtyard that is skylighted above the second floor, and two separate wings (the Annexes) that extend to the west. The main block and wings are nine stories in height. The area between the Annexes contains a hip-roofed train shed that connected to a spur line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

The Merchandise Building is organized in 12,000 square foot bays divided by fire walls. Each bay served as a merchandise department.

2. **Stairways**

Between each pair of merchandise storage areas in the building is a stairwell surrounded by brick walls. Each stair can be separated from the adjacent bays by sliding metal fire doors.

In the areas of mill construction, the stairs and landings are constructed of timber. In other areas, the stairs are concrete in steel pans, and the landings are concrete.

One of the two original ornamental stairways remains in the main lobby, leading to the third floor. Above the third floor, this stairway is metal pan



and concrete construction, and continues to the fourteenth floor of the Tower.

**3. Flooring**

The flooring is varnished wood, typically maple. In renovated areas of the building, floor finishes include 9 x 9 vinyl tile, ceramic tile, and carpet.

The Grocery Building floors are concrete at the basement, first, and second floors. This third through sixth floors are finished with wood over structural concrete.

The main entrance lobby, located at the east end of the building at the base of the Tower, has been renovated. This space has a terrazzo floor.

**4. Wall and ceiling finish**

The interior faces of the exterior walls in the Merchandise Departments are exposed brick that has been painted. The brickwork at the top of the inside face of both the exterior and courtyard walls is corbeled. The walls within the stairwells are also painted brick.

In typical Tower offices, the walls are painted plaster with wood trim. The walls in offices and break rooms are also painted plaster.

The ceilings in the Merchandise Departments are typically exposed wood that has been painted. At the top floor, the ceiling is a monitor configuration constructed of wood that is painted. At all other floors, the ceiling is a flat wood surface that is painted. The ceilings in the retail store areas are typically painted black. In typical Tower offices, the ceiling is finish plaster over clay tile.

In renovated areas of the building, exterior walls are painted brick, and interior wall finishes include paneling and wallpaper. Some interior partition walls in renovated areas are masonry block that has been painted. The second floor of the Box Factory was used as a cafeteria, and has ceramic tile and plaster walls.

In renovated areas, ceilings are typically dropped acoustical tile systems. The original ceilings are visible above the newer dropped ceilings.

Original features are retained in several spaces, including the fourteenth floor of the Tower. This is a two-story space with a mezzanine level. There is an exterior observation deck accessible through a wood door in each wall. This space has a wood floor and plaster walls and ceiling with ornamental dentilated cove moldings. The windows have arched surrounds with two-full height windows surmounted by a transom. There is an ornamental metal railing at the mezzanine, which is reached by a metal stairway.

5. Doors and windows

Interior doors to offices and break rooms are typically wood with glazing in the upper half. Interior sliding fire doors between the Merchandise Departments are metal, and are set in tracks. At the second floor level, openings in the walls surrounding the court were fitted with double steel shutters for fire protection.

In the Shipping Court area and in the Annexes at entrances to the train shed, rolling shutters in the south exterior wall provide access to the railroad tracks. Some of the rolling shutters have been walled over with masonry or wood framing from the interior.

In renovated areas, doors include metal and hollow-core wood doors.

Interior windows include wood-framed glass transoms in the interior walls of break rooms and offices.

6. Mechanical equipment

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation

Heat is provided by a two-pipe steam radiator system. In the Merchandise Departments, one or two radiators are located in each window bay, below the center window, along the exterior walls. In other areas of the building, radiators are typically located along exterior walls. Boilers are located in the Power House across Homan Avenue to the east of the Merchandise Building. Steam is run in pipes through tunnels beneath the basement.

The Tower, and the fourth through sixth floors of the Grocery Building, are air conditioned. In these air conditioned portions of the building, ductwork is suspended from the ceilings. The remainder of the building is not air conditioned, but all merchandise departments and offices are fitted with electric fans. Fresh air is also provided through a duct system. Air conditioning is provided from the Power House. Electrical service was originally provided from the Power House, and was provided from Commonwealth Edison vaults in the basement since the approximately 1950. (The conversion from electricity generated at the Power House to Commonwealth Edison vaults in the different buildings on site occurred between 1945 and 1951. The main Commonwealth Edison line into the site runs beneath Central Park Avenue.)

b. Lighting

In some of the Tower offices, older suspended incandescent light fixtures remain in place. Most of the lighting in the building consists of non-original suspended fluorescent fixtures. In some offices, surface-mounted conduit was run across walls and ceilings.

c. Plumbing

The building is sprinklered. There are three storage tanks for the building sprinkler system located at the twelfth floor level in the Tower. Each tank is 63,000 gallons in capacity.

Fire hoses are located in the elevator lobbies.

The Cold Storage freezers are located in the basement of the Grocery Building, Section 12.

Showers have been added in the areas of the tenth and eleventh floor of the Tower, where offices were converted for use as locker rooms.

d. Conveyance Systems

The Merchandise Building has nine electric passenger elevators, located at the Tower, Sections D and I, and Sections 11 and 12. The passenger elevators retain original ornamental surrounds, with ornamental grilles for the exterior doors.

The building also has 26 hydraulic freight elevators, located between each pair of bays that housed the merchandise departments.

Other conveyance systems include the pneumatic tube system used to transmit order tickets, and the conveyors belts and spiral tubes used to transmit order items.

Some original fixtures including portions of the pneumatic tubes and extensive conveyor systems remain throughout the building, in the Merchandise Departments. The seven spiral chutes also remain intact. Extensive equipment remains in Shipping Court, including conveyor systems and sorting bins.

A conveyor that extended around the level of the mezzanine in the Shipping Court to remove empty CDS boxes has been removed. A second conveyor was located in the train shed, and served the returns department. Several other conveyors have been removed.

7. Original furnishings

The principal original furnishings remaining in the Merchandise Building consist of the conveyors and spiral chutes that were used to move goods through the building as part of the order filling, handling, and shipping process. Simple, original wood shelves are also still extant throughout the Merchandise Departments. Some employee break rooms have painted wood benches original to the building.

### PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Archival Drawings

Archival copies of the following drawings are included in this HABS documentation. An annotated list of the drawings is included with that portion of the HABS documentation.

##### Site Plans

*Sears, Roebuck and Co., Approximately 1/8 inch to 12 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 198, 4 November 1937.*

*Plot of Sears Complex - Homan-Arthington Area, One inch to 100 feet, Prepared by Sears Departments 730 and 824, 26 October 1960.*

##### Architectural Drawings

*First Floor Plan, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 16 February 1905.*

*Tower Floor Plans, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905.*

*North Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*South Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*East Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*West Elevation, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*Transverse and Longitudinal Sections, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 14 February 1905.*

*Tower Plans and Details, 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted, Nimmons and Fellows, 15 March 1905.*

*Tower Plans and Details, 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted, Nimmons and Fellows; E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers), 15 March 1905.*

*Detail Elevations and Sections, 1/2 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905.*

*First Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*North Elevation - Annex "A", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*South Elevation - Annex "A", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*North Elevation - Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*West Elevation - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Transverse Section - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Detail Elevations - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/2 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Annex "B," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*South Elevation (Annex "A," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*West Elevation and Transverse Section (Annex "A," bays P and Q, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.*

*Basement Floor Plan, 1/8 inch to one foot, George C. Nimmons (?), date obscured (1912).*

*North Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*South Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*West Elevation (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.*

*Schematic Floor Plan, 1/64 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 131, 25 June 1917.*

*Fourth Floor Plan (Two sheets), 1/16 inch to one foot, Larsen-Wulff Architects, Undated.*

### **Conveyor and Pneumatic Tube Systems**

*Section through Merchandise Building Looking East Showing System of Conveyors in Shipping Department, 1/4 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, 26 April 1905.*

*Conveyors - Merchandise Building, 1/16 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, Revised 10 May 1905.*

*Details of Spiral Conveyors in Merchandise Building, 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch to one foot, Adams and Schwab, 13 May 1905.*

*Arrangement of Shipping Room Belt Conveyors in Merchandise Building for Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Undated (probably before 1913).*

*General Layout of All Mdse Dept. Conveyors, 1/16 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 213 (engineer unknown), 6 October 1916.*

*General Layout of Pneumatic Tubes - Sheets 1, 2, 3, and 9, One inch to 60 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown), Undated (probably around 1920).*

*Rearrangement of Receiving Racks, Conveyors, Etc., 3/16 inch to one foot, Engineer Unknown, Revised 2 November 1937.*

*2nd Floor Section "B", 1/4 inch to one foot, Swain and Meyers, Inc., 24 June 1963*

### **B. Field Record Drawings**

Copies of the following drawings are included in the field record with this HABS documentation. An annotated list of the drawings is included with the field record.

#### **Site Plan Drawings**

*Plat of Survey, One inch to twenty feet, Gustav H. Carlson (surveyor), 30 January 1905.*

#### **Architectural Drawings**

*North Elevation, 1/16 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, February 1905 (Date obscured).*

*Wall Section Detail, scale as noted, Nimmons and Fellows; E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers), 16 February 1905.*

*Basement Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Second Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B", 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).*

*Third Floor Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B"*, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).

*Roof Plan - Annex "A" and Annex "B"*, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).

*South Elevation - Annex "B"*, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).

*Details of Platforms*, 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 1905 (Exact date obscured).

*Ninth Floor Plan* (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.

*Roof Plan* (Annex "A," bays J and K, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.

*Detail Elevation* (Annexes "A" and "B," for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 25 January 1910.

*Roof Plan* (Annex "A," bays L, M, N, and O, for floors four through nine), 1/8 inch to one foot, Nimmons and Fellows, 17 May 1916.

*Layout of Merchandise Building*, 1/64 inch to one foot, Drawn Sears Department 131, 25 June 1917.

*Floor Plan - 14th Floor Tower*, 3/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 224, 19 March 1923.

*Alterations to Merchandise Building for Retail Store*, 1/16 inch to one foot, George C. Nimmons and Company, Revised 22 December 1924.

*Floor Plan of First Floor Merchandise*, 1/16 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 224, 26 December 1924.

*Entrance Remodeling - Plans and Details*, scale as noted, John Stokes Redden, 14 April 1961.

#### **Conveyor and Pneumatic Tube Systems**

*Pneumatic Tube Station*, Three inches to one foot, Adams and Schwab, Revised 28 December 1905.

*General Arrangement of Empty Box Conveyor for Sears, Roebuck and Co.*, 1/16 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Revised 27 March 1913.

*Arrangement Showing Billing and Empty Basket Return Belts in Shipping Room for Sears, Roebuck and Co.*, 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, Revised 12 December 1914.



*Spiral Chute to be Installed in N.W. Corner Section L in the Merchandise Building, 1/4 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 28 May 1919.*

*Extension to Present Spiral Gravity Conveyor in Section "H" of the Merchandise Building, 1/4 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 9 July 1919.*

*General Layout of Pneumatic Tubes - Sheets 4 through 8, and 10 through 14, One inch to 60 feet, Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown), Undated (probably around 1920).*

*Conveyor Plan for Post Office in Merchandise Building, 1/8 inch to one foot, Martin C. Schwab, 4 June 1920.*

*Space Occupied by Post Office at Sears-Roebuck Mail Order House, 1/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by the United States Post Office, October 1944.*

*Department 155 Layout - Second Floor Truck Court, 1/8 inch to one foot, Drawn by Sears Department 131M (Engineer Unknown), Revised 20 May 1965.*

#### C. Early Views

*Overall view of Merchandise Building, view to southwest during construction. Photograph circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Overall view of Merchandise Building, view to northeast during construction. Photograph circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Merchandise Building, northeast corner. Photograph circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Panoramic view of north side of Merchandise Building with athletic field in foreground. Photograph dated August, 1911, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*View of train spur and entrance to train shed at west side of Merchandise Building. Photograph (retouched) circa 1917, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Aerial view of Merchandise Building, view to southwest. Photograph dated 1964, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, train shed, view to east. Photograph circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.*

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, north pneumatic tube station, Section H, basement, view to southwest.* Photograph (retouched) circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, typical merchandise department.* Photograph circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, labeling portion of shipping department.* Photograph circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, shipping court, second floor.* Photograph (retouched) circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, packaging department second floor.* Photograph (retouched) circa 1920, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

*Interior view of Merchandise Building, shipping court, third floor.* Photograph (retouched) circa 1920s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Photographer unknown.

#### D. Interviews

Interviews of Mr. Thomas Dorgan, Building Manager, Charles H. Shaw Company, at Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Administration Building, by Jeffrey P. Koerber, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, February-March, 1994.

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HABS No. IL-1187-A

Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Merchandise Building  
924 South Homan Avenue  
(Homan Avenue at Arthington Street)  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

Documentation: 33 exterior photographs (1994)  
44 interior photographs (1994)  
13 photographic copies of photographs  
37 photograph of original construction drawings

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer March, 1994

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IL-1187-A-63	THIRD FLOOR, SHIPPING COURT, CONVEYORS FROM SORTING AREA TO PACKAGE HANDLING AND WRAPPING
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IL-1187-A-71	CONTROL DELIVERY SERVICE (CDS) ORDER BINS
IL-1187-A-72	SECOND FLOOR, TRAIN SHED BETWEEN ANNEX A AND ANNEX B, GENERAL VIEW
IL-1187-A-73	SECOND FLOOR, TRAIN SHED BETWEEN ANNEX A AND ANNEX B, DETAIL OF CONVEYORS AT EAST END
IL-1187-A-74	TENTH FLOOR, TYPICAL OFFICE AREA

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- IL-1187-A-75 TOWER, TWELFTH FLOOR, WATER STORAGE TANKS FOR SPRINKLER SYSTEM
- IL-1187-A-76 FOURTEENTH FLOOR, GENERAL VIEW OF OBSERVATION LEVEL, VIEW TO SOUTHEAST
- IL-1187-A-77 FOURTEENTH FLOOR, GENERAL VIEW OF OBSERVATION LEVEL, VIEW TO NORTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-78 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST DURING CONSTRUCTION
- IL-1187-A-79 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1905, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
OVERALL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO NORTHEAST DURING CONSTRUCTION
- IL-1187-A-80 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
MERCHANDISE BUILDING, NORTHEAST CORNER
- IL-1187-A-81 Photographic copy of photograph (August, 1911, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
PANORAMIC VIEW OF NORTH SIDE OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING WITH ATHLETIC FIELD IN FOREGROUND
- IL-1187-A-82 Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1917, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
VIEW OF TRAIN SPUR AND ENTRANCE TO TRAIN SHED AT WEST SIDE OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-83 Photographic copy of photograph (1964, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
AERIAL VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-84 Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1910, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, TRAIN SHED, VIEW TO EAST

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- IL-1187-A-85      Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, NORTH PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION, SECTION H, BASEMENT, VIEW TO SOUTHWEST
- IL-1187-A-86      Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, TYPICAL MERCHANDISE DEPARTMENT
- IL-1187-A-87      Photographic copy of photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, LABELING PORTION OF SHIPPING DEPARTMENT
- IL-1187-A-88      Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1918, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, SHIPPING COURT, SECOND FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-89      Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1920, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, PACKAGING DEPARTMENT SECOND FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-90      Photographic copy of retouched photograph (circa 1920s, original print in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Photographer unknown.  
INTERIOR VIEW OF MERCHANDISE BUILDING, SHIPPING COURT, THIRD FLOOR
- IL-1187-A-91      Photographic copy of drawing (16 February 1905, reproduction of original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/16 inch to one foot.  
Plan dimensions are given on this floor plan of the first four bays of warehouse west of Homan Avenue. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

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- IL-1187-A-92      Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, reproduction of original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot  
Floor plans of the levels of the Tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
TOWER FLOOR PLANS
- IL-1187-A-93      Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Partial elevation drawing of the first four bays west of Homan Avenue. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
NORTH ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-94      Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Partial elevation drawing of the first four bays west of Homan Avenue.  
SOUTH ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-95      Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Main elevation along Homan Avenue, including the tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
EAST ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-96      Photographic copy of drawing (February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Elevation of the west face showing the original 1905 construction, where Annex A and B were built to a height of three floors.  
WEST ELEVATION
- IL-1187-A-97      Photographic copy of drawing (14 February 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/16 inch to one foot.  
Section drawings through the first four warehouse bays west of Homan Avenue.  
TRANSVERSE AND LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS

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- IL-1187-A-98      Photographic copy of drawing (15 March 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted.  
Detail sheet includes elevation details at the top of the tower.  
TOWER PLANS AND DETAILS
- IL-1187-A-99      Photographic copy of drawing (15 March 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows, E.C. and R.M. Shankland (Civil Engineers). 1/2 inch to one foot or as noted.  
Detail sheet includes wall section at the top of the tower. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
TOWER PLANS AND DETAILS
- IL-1187-A-100      Photographic copy of drawing (February, 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot. Large scale details for the north elevation. This drawing is excerpted from a blueprint set.  
DETAIL ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS
- IL-1187-A-101      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
First floor plan for the portions of Annex A and Annex B built in 1905 (three floors only) along with the nine floors along Homan Avenue.  
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-102      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Section through train shed, including the elevation of the curved wall of the end bay. Opposite hand section provided in field record.  
NORTH ELEVATION - ANNEX A
- IL-1187-A-103      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
South elevation adjacent to the railroad tracks; only the first three floors were built at that time.  
SOUTH ELEVATION - ANNEX A



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- IL-1187-A-104      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
North elevation along Arthington Street (then Harvard Street); only the first three floors were built at that time.  
NORTH ELEVATION - ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-105      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Shows elevation of the train shed, the curved facade of Annex A, and Annex B before the Grocery Building was constructed.  
WEST ELEVATION - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-106      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Section through annexes and train shed, with elevation of nine story portion of warehouse.  
TRANSVERSE SECTION - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-107      Photographic copy of drawing (1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/2 inch to one foot.  
Large scale drawings of elevation details.  
DETAIL ELEVATIONS - ANNEX A AND ANNEX B
- IL-1187-A-108      Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Floor plan for the first addition to Annex A. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.  
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN (ANNEX A, BAYS J AND K, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-109      Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Floor plan for the first addition to Annex B. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.  
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN (ANNEX B, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)

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- IL-1187-A-110      Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Drawings for the first addition to Annex B. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set.  
SOUTH ELEVATION (ANNEX B, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-111      Photographic copy of drawing (25 January 1910, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Drawings for the first addition to Annex A. This drawing excerpted from blueprint set in Sears drawing archive.  
WEST ELEVATION AND TRANSVERSE SECTION (ANNEX A, BAYS P AND Q, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-112      Photographic copy of drawing (1912, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). George C. Nimmons. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
This floor plan is the only original drawing for bays 11 and 12 (Grocery Building), constructed at the corner of Arthington (then called Harvard Street) and Central Park Avenue. The building was constructed in 1912 and designed by the firm of George C. Nimmons. This structure is of reinforced concrete construction.  
GROCERY BUILDING, BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
- IL-1187-A-113      Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Elevation along the train shed. Second addition to Annex A.  
NORTH ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-114      Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Elevation adjacent to the railroad tracks. Second addition to Annex A.  
  
SOUTH ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)

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- IL-1187-A-115      Photographic copy of drawing (17 May 1916, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Nimmons and Fellows. 1/8 inch to one foot. Shows the curved end bay of the warehouse. Second addition to Annex A.  
WEST ELEVATION (ANNEX A, BAYS L, M, N, AND O, FOR FLOORS FOUR THROUGH NINE)
- IL-1187-A-116      Photographic copy of drawing (25 June 1917, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 131. 1/64 inch to one foot.  
Schematic plan of the Merchandise Building, describing the type of construction of the different portions of the building and shows the layout of the railroad tracks around the building. At the date of this drawing the building had all of the major additions complete (to Annex A, Annex B, and the Box Factory).  
SCHEMATIC FLOOR PLAN
- IL-1187-A-117      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Larsen-Wulff Architects. 1/16 inch to one foot.  
Drawing of the entire floor plan from Homan Avenue to Central Park Avenue, probably traced in the 1970s or early 1980s.  
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - EAST HALF
- IL-1187-A-118      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Larsen-Wulff Architects. 1/16 inch to one foot.  
Drawing of the entire floor plan from Homan Avenue to Central Park Avenue, probably traced in the 1970s or early 1980s.  
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - WEST HALF
- IL-1187-A-119      Photographic copy of drawing (26 April 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/4 inch to one foot.  
Section drawing with the relationship of the spiral chutes in bays B and G to the shipping area.  
SECTION THROUGH MERCHANDISE BUILDING LOOKING EAST  
SHOWING SYSTEM OF CONVEYORS IN SHIPPING DEPARTMENT

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- IL-1187-A-120      Photographic copy of drawing (revised 10 May 1905, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/16 inch to one foot. Partial (third?) Floor plan around the shipping area court, showing the arrangement of the conveyors. (Drawing title is not legible.)  
CONVEYORS - MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-121      Photographic copy of drawing (13 May 1905, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Adams and Schwab. 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch to one foot.  
Plan and section drawings for the installation of spiral chutes, includes structural framing details.  
DETAILS OF SPIRAL CONVEYORS IN MERCHANDISE BUILDING
- IL-1187-A-122      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably before 1913, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Martin C. Schwab. 1/8 inch to one foot.  
Partial second/third floor plan with the conveyor arrangement in the shipping room with a conveyor extension to the Post Office.  
ARRANGEMENT OF SHIPPING ROOM BELT CONVEYORS IN MERCHANDISE BUILDING FOR SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.
- IL-1187-A-123      Photographic copy of drawing (6 October 1916, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 213 (engineer unknown). 1/16 inch to one foot.  
Partial fourth/fifth floor plan and schematic building section showing the relationship of the gravity conveyors in the warehouse space to the spiral chutes.  
GENERAL LAYOUT OF ALL MDSE DEPT. CONVEYORS
- IL-1187-A-124      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet.  
Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.  
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 1 - BASEMENT)

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- IL-1187-A-125      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.  
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 2 - BASEMENT)
- IL-1187-A-126      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 16 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.  
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 3 - BASEMENT)
- IL-1187-A-127      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, probably around 1920, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Drawn by Sears Department 224 (engineer unknown). 1 inch to 60 feet. Archival copies are provided for the basement floor plans, layout of the two central pneumatic tube stations, and the fourth floor (typical merchandise storage). Reproductions of sheets 4 through 8 and 10 through 14 are provided in field record.  
GENERAL LAYOUT OF PNEUMATIC TUBES (SHEET 9 - FOURTH FLOOR)
- IL-1187-A-128      Photographic copy of drawing (revised 2 November 1927, original drawing in Archives, Office of the Building, Administration Building, Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail Order Plant, Chicago, Illinois). Engineer unknown. 3/16 inch to one foot.  
Partial second floor plan of the shipping area showing modifications. rearrangement of receiving racks, conveyors, etc.
- IL-1187-A-129      Photographic copy of drawing (24 June 1963, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Swain and Meyers, Inc. 1/4 inch to one foot.  
Partial floor plan illustrating the layout of the large package handling area. Tables and equipment not present at the time of the survey are shown.  
SECOND FLOOR, SECTION B

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- IL-1187-A-130      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Engineer unknown. Full size.  
Pneumatic tube cartridges used at the time of the Plant closing.  
4" PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM - 11" LEATHER CARRIER
- IL-1187-A-131      Photographic copy of drawing (undated, original drawing in Archives, Public Affairs Department, Sears Merchandise Group, Hoffman Estates, Illinois). Engineer unknown. Full size.  
Pneumatic tube cartridges used at the time of the Plant closing.  
4" PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM - 11" LEATHER CARRIER













HABS No.

IL-1187-A-5







SEARS ROEBUCK  
AND COMPANY

- 1905 -

GEORGE C NIMMONS - WILLIAM K FELLOWS  
ARCHITECTS

MARTIN C SCHWAB CONSULTING ENGINEER  
THOMPSON STARRETT COMPANY BUILDERS





























4435 N. IL-1187-A-17

ONE  
WAY  
▲





SEARS ROEBUCK AND CO  
CHICAGO CATALOG ORDER



HABS No. IL-1187-A-19



1187-A-20

1187-A-20





















HABS No. IL-1187-A-26





















HABS No. IL-1187-A-33





HADS No IL-1187-A-34

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HA 35 No

IL-1187-A-35







HARS No. IL-1187-A-37







HABS No IL-1187-A-39



KABS No IL-1187-A-40





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IL-1187-A-41

FOR  
BAND CARRIERS  
CALL 3787



HAAS No. IL-1187-A-42





ALB No IL-1187-A-43







HABS No IL-1187-A-45





WABS N. IL - 1187 - A - 46

BLDG. 9

SEC. 3



LABS No IL-1187-A-47







IL-1187-A-49









ARBS N. IL-1187-A-51





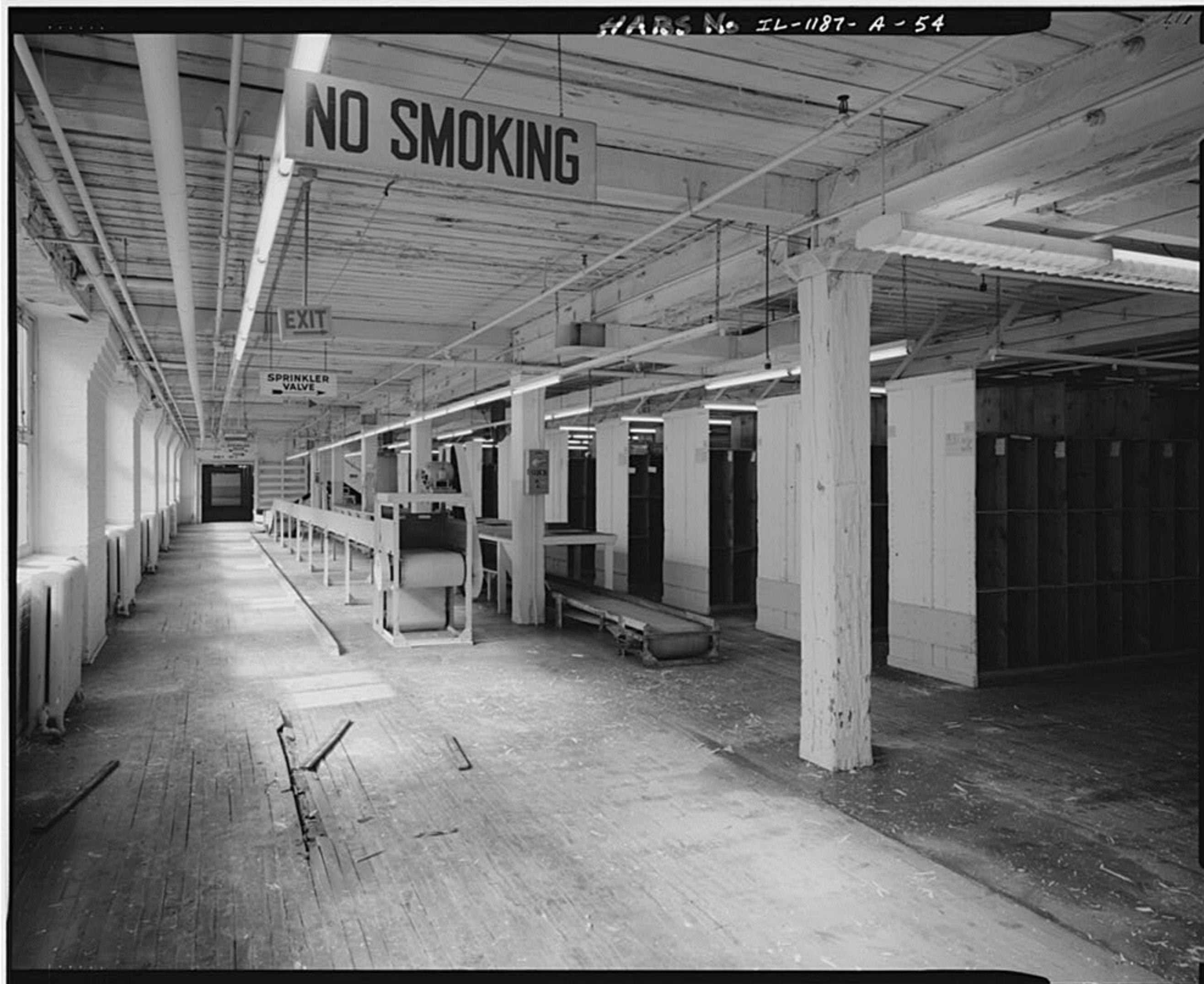




NO SMOKING

EXIT

SPRINKLER  
VALVE





HABS No. IL-1187-A-55





HARS No IL-1187-A-50

SEAL WEIGHT  
150 LBS.

6H25

SINGLES

6H2



HARS No. IL-1187-A-57





HABS No IL-1187-A-58



GRAVITY PACKAGE CONVEYOR

BUILT BY

OTTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY

PATD: JUNE 10, 1902 & MAY 19, 1908.

NEW YORK

OTHER PATENTS PENDING

CHICAGO

HA35 M. IL-1187-A-60



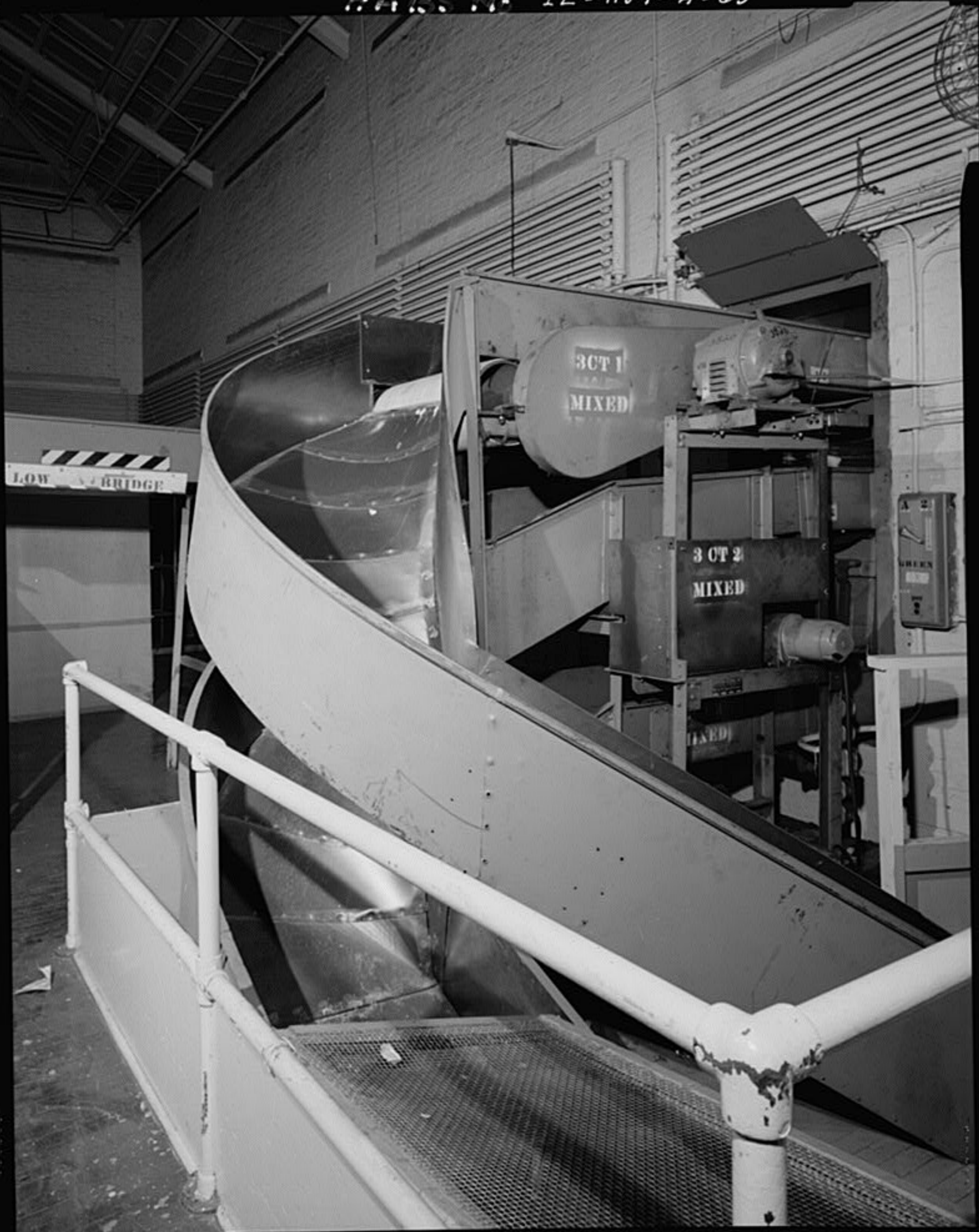


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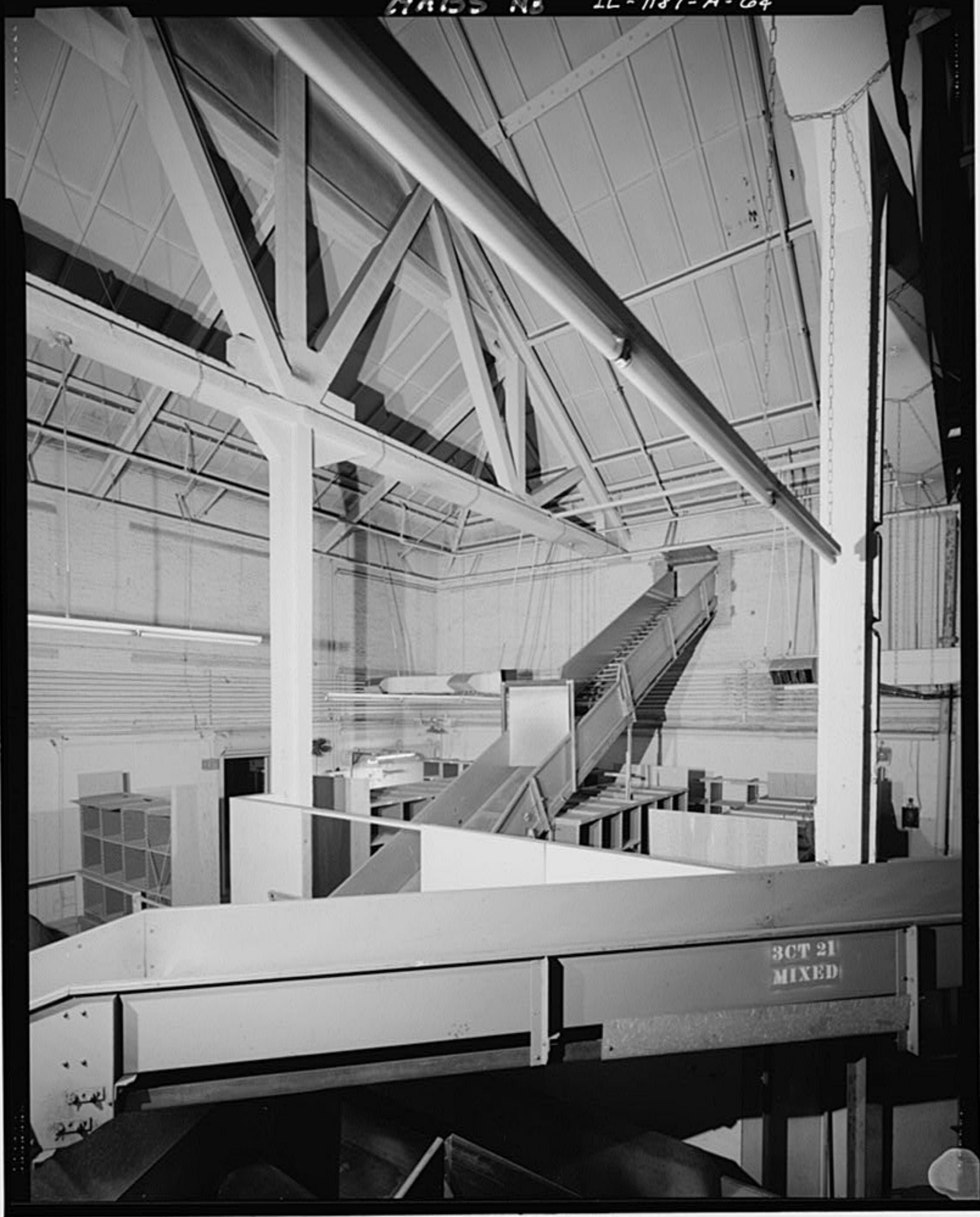








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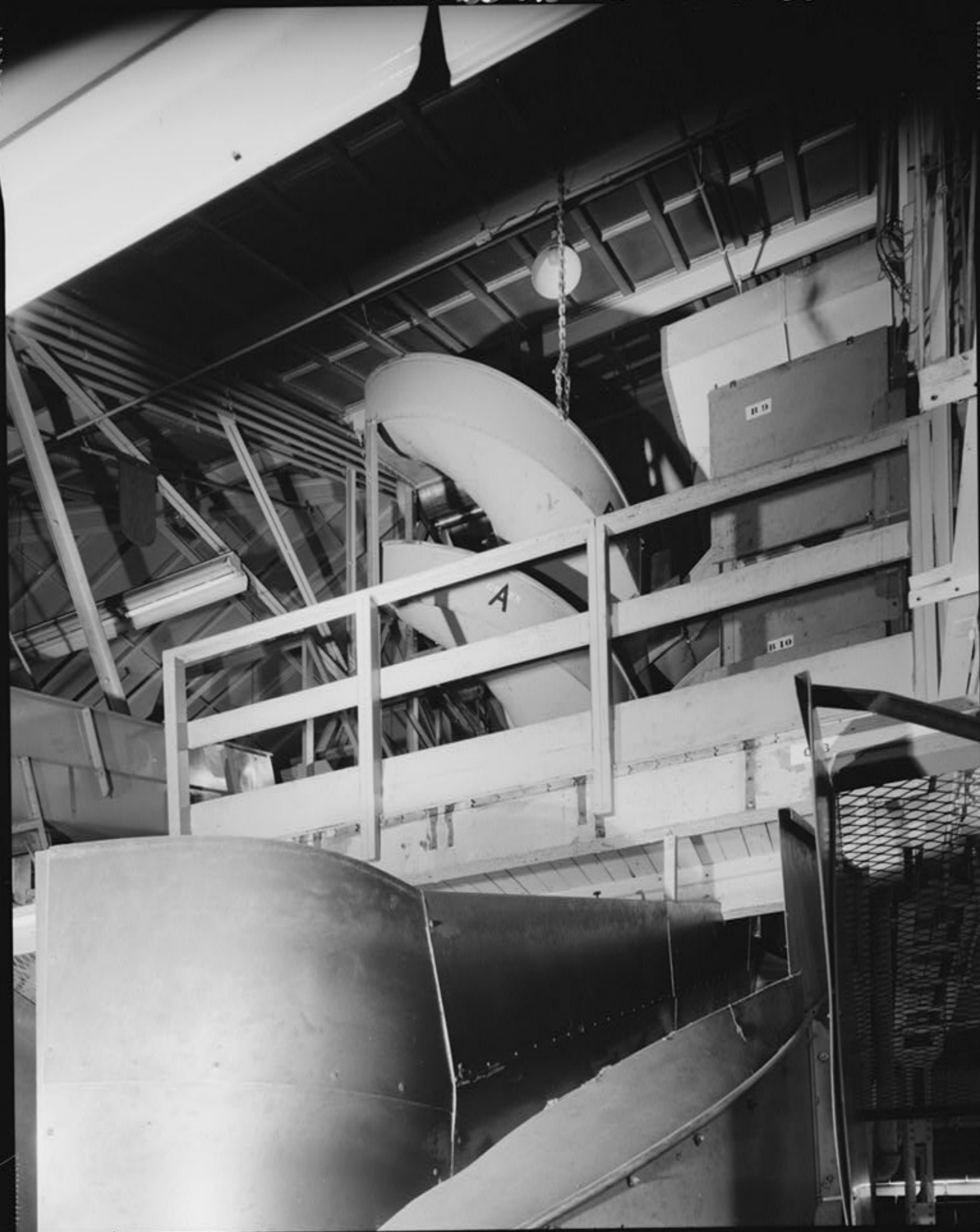


HAB. No. IL-1187-A-65





HABS No. IL-1187-A-66







HABS No IL-1187-A-68



HABS No IL-1187-A-69





HABS No. IL-1187-A-70





HABS No IL-1187-A-71



HABS No. IL-1187-A-72





HABS No IL-1187-A-73



HABS No IL-1187-A-74





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HABS NO

IL-1187-A-76



HABS No IL-1187-A-77











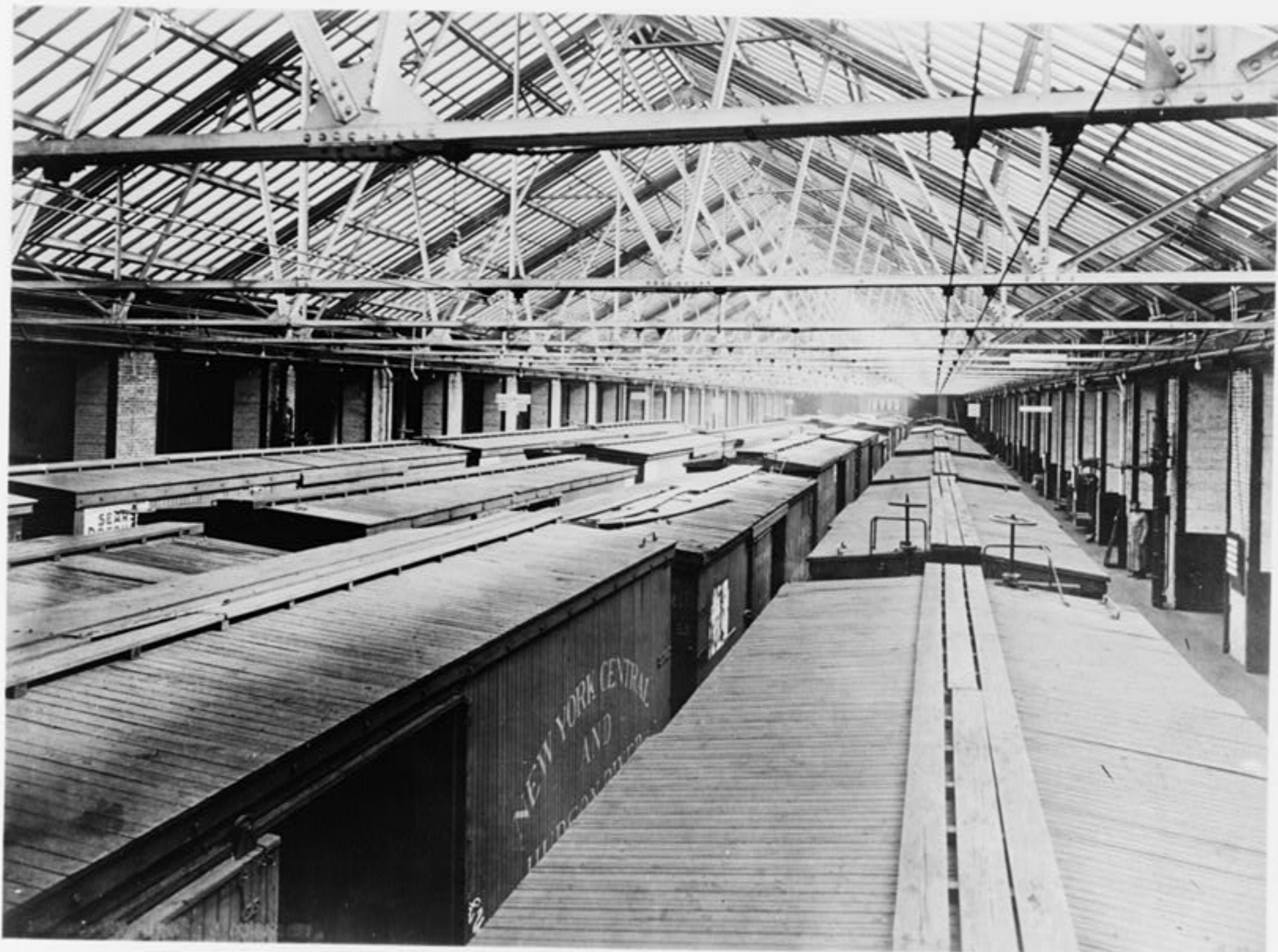




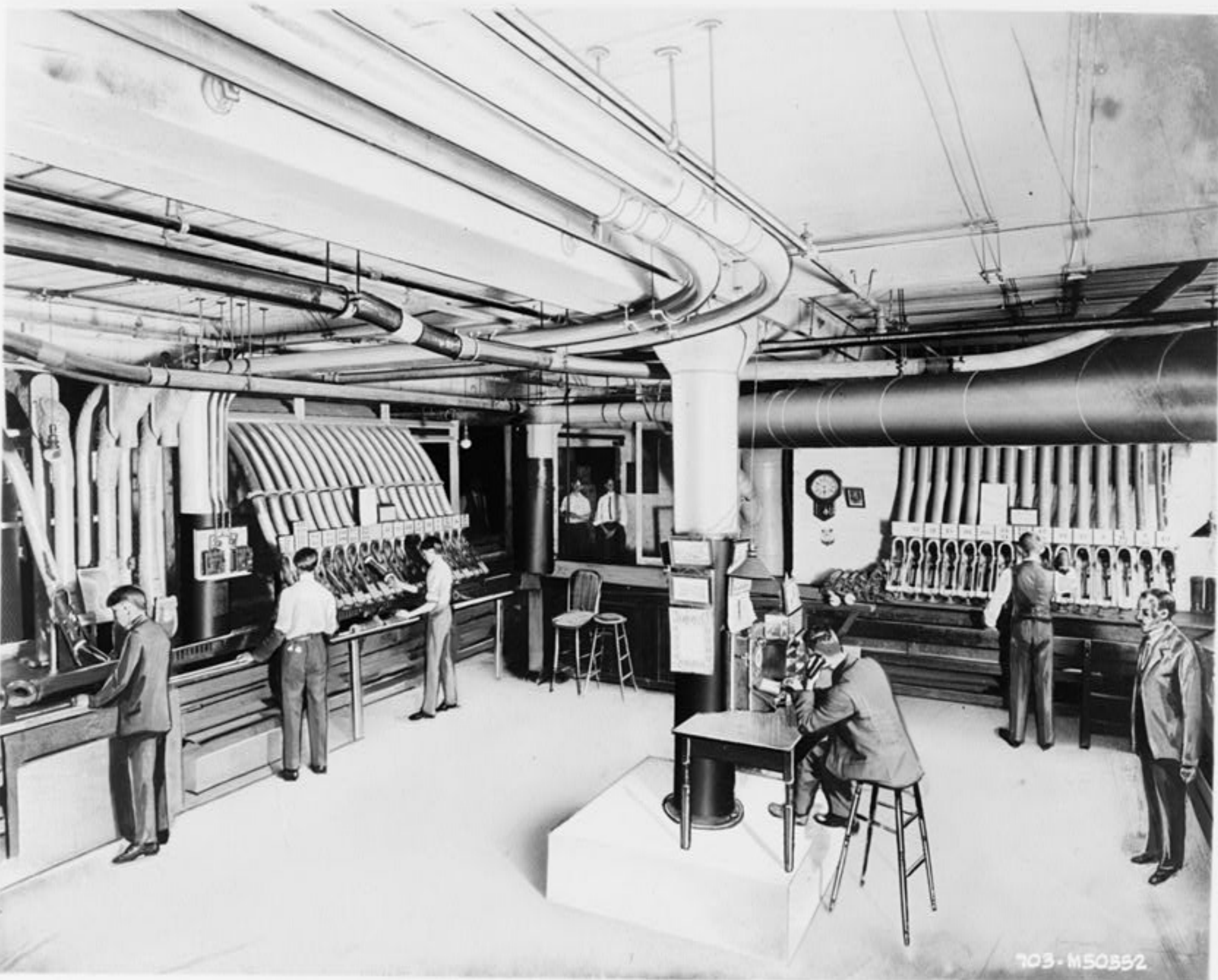












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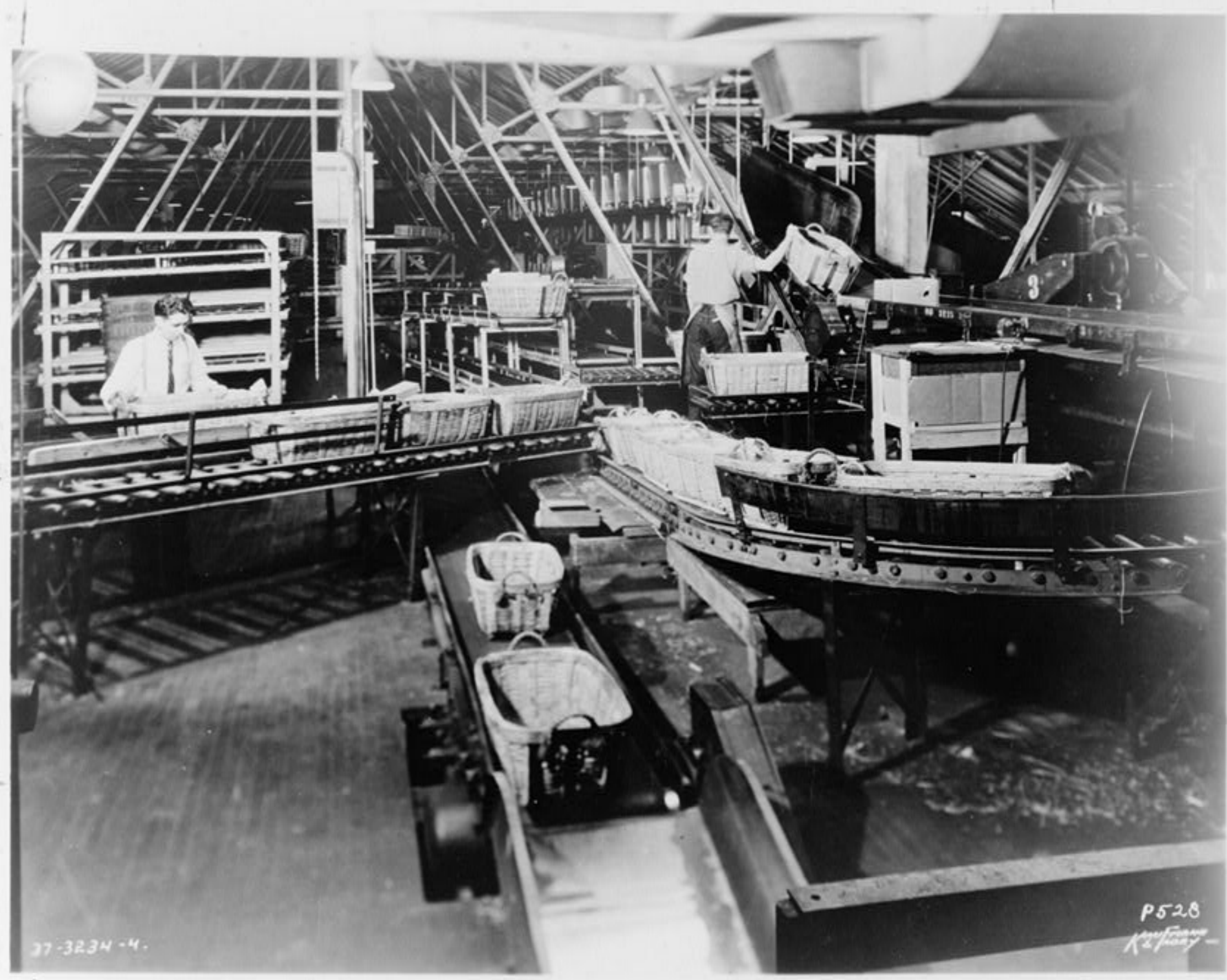








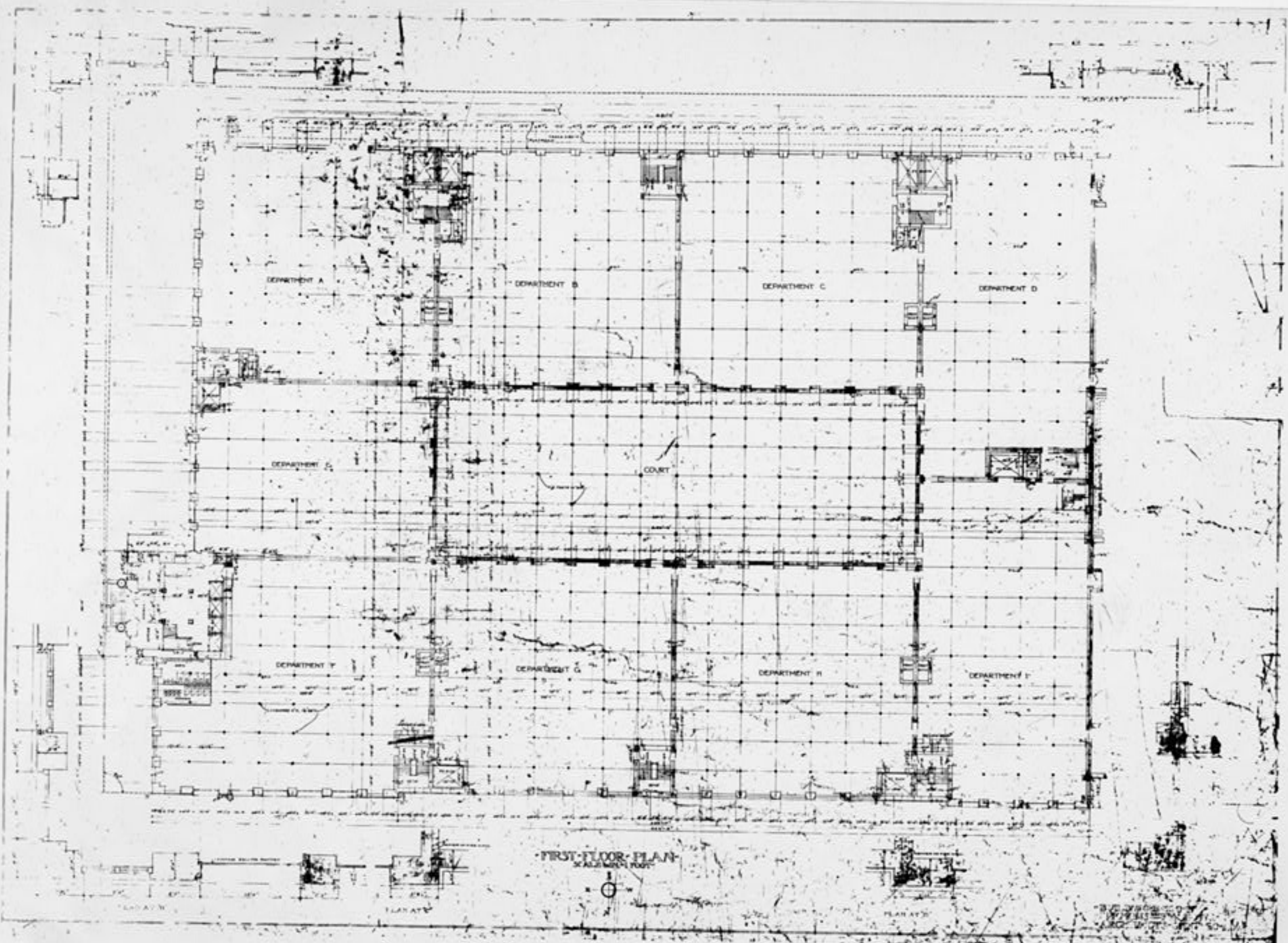




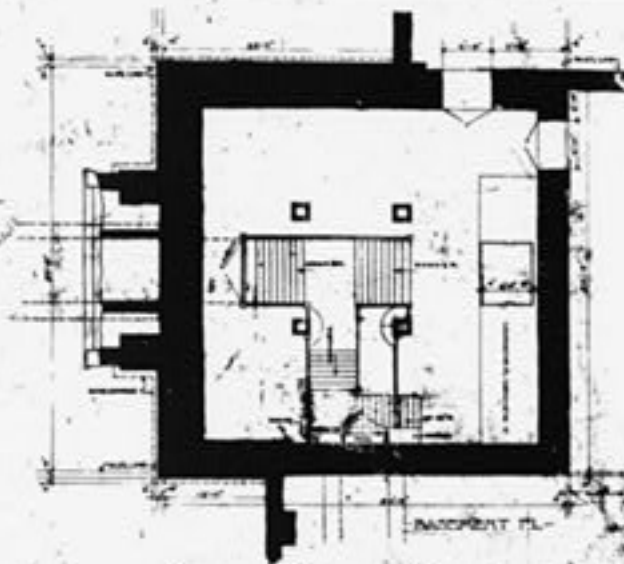
37-3234-4.

P528  
K. J. Farnham

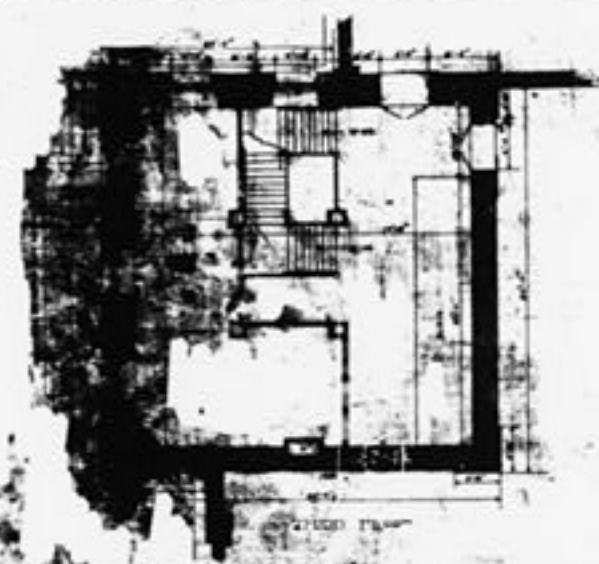




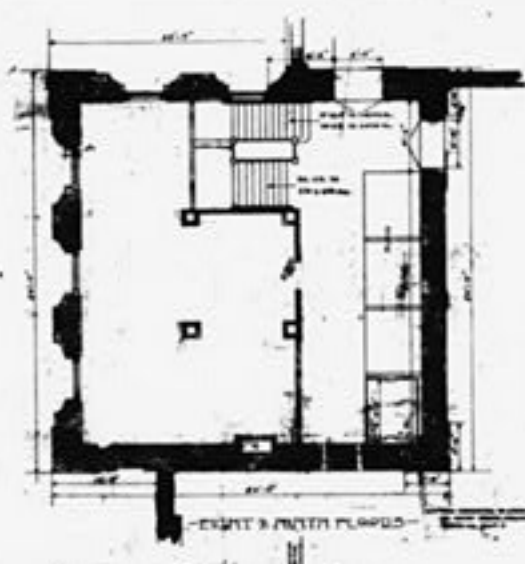
FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



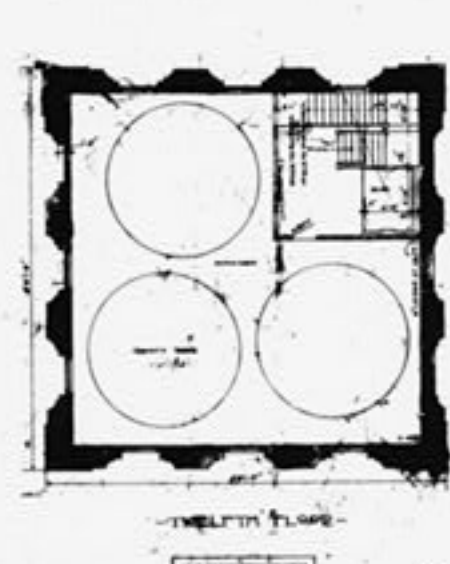
THIRTEENTH FLOOR



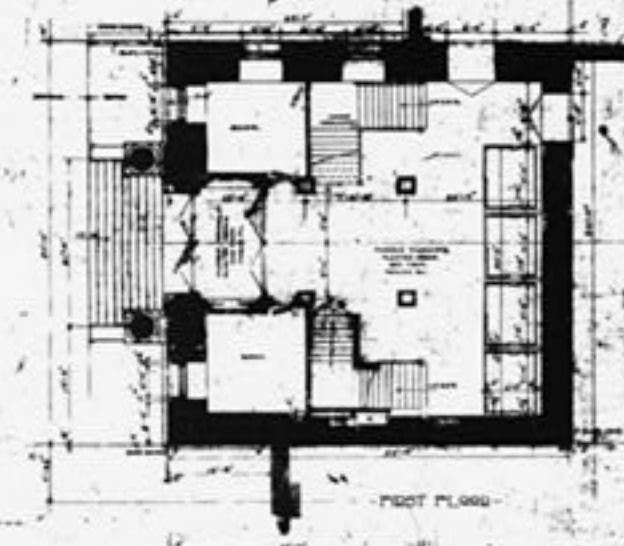
TWELFTH FLOOR



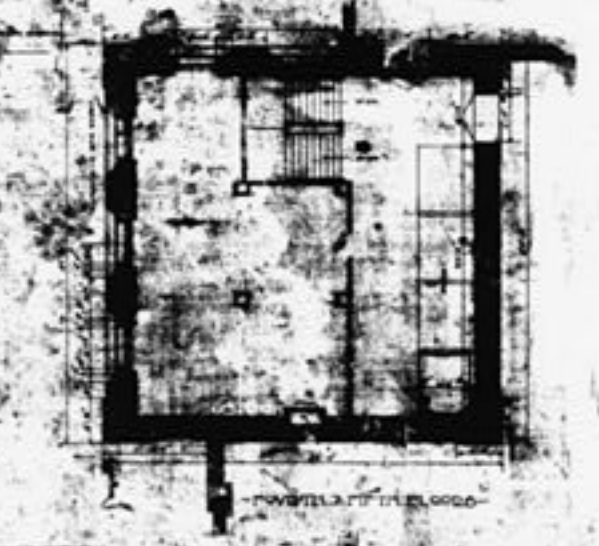
ELEVENTH FLOOR



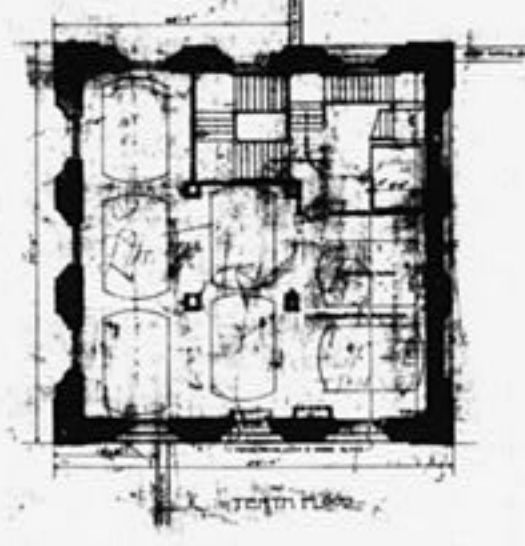
TENTH FLOOR



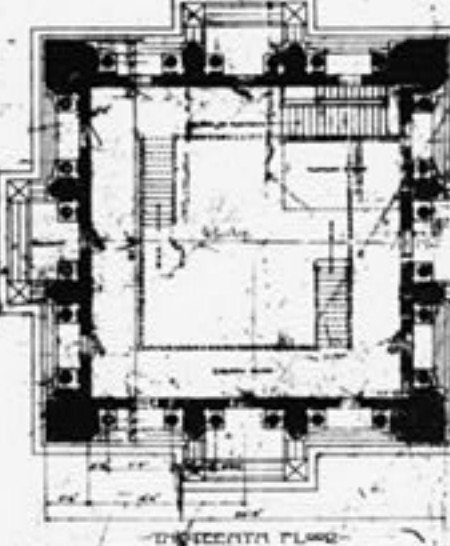
NINTH FLOOR



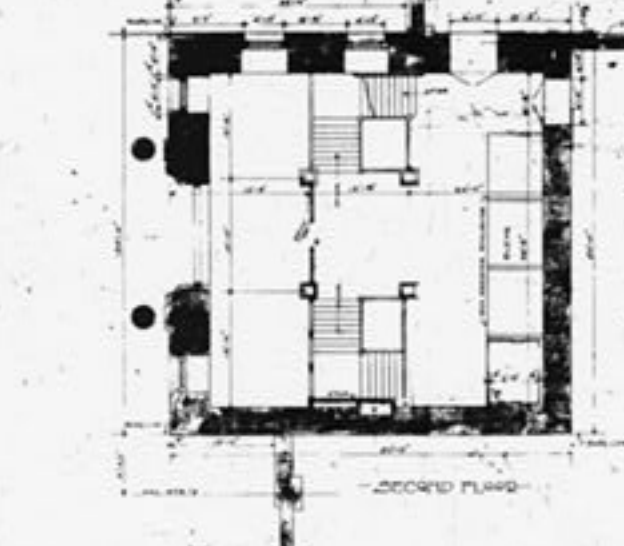
EIGHTH FLOOR



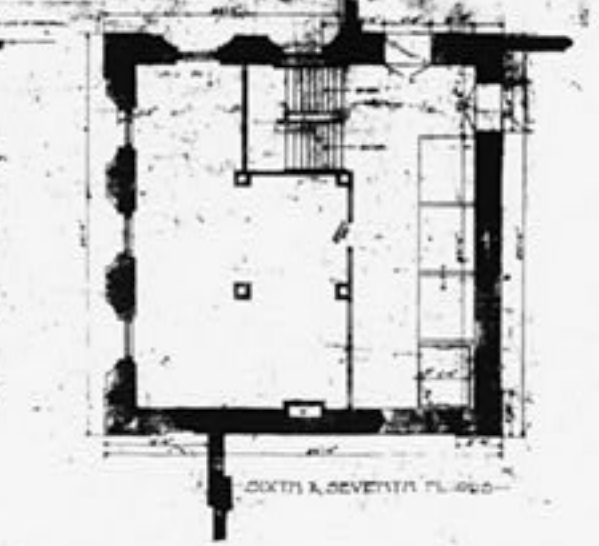
SEVENTH FLOOR



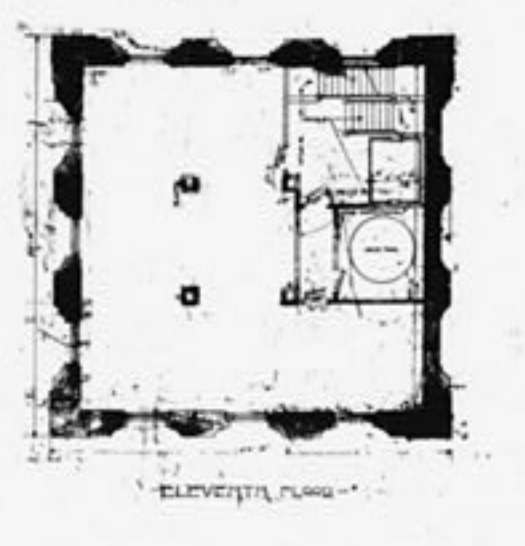
SIXTH FLOOR



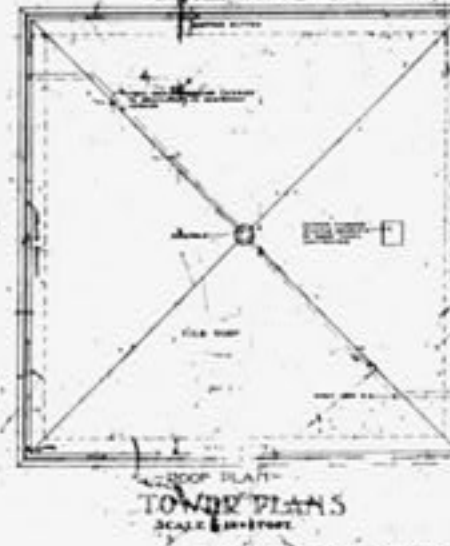
FIFTH FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

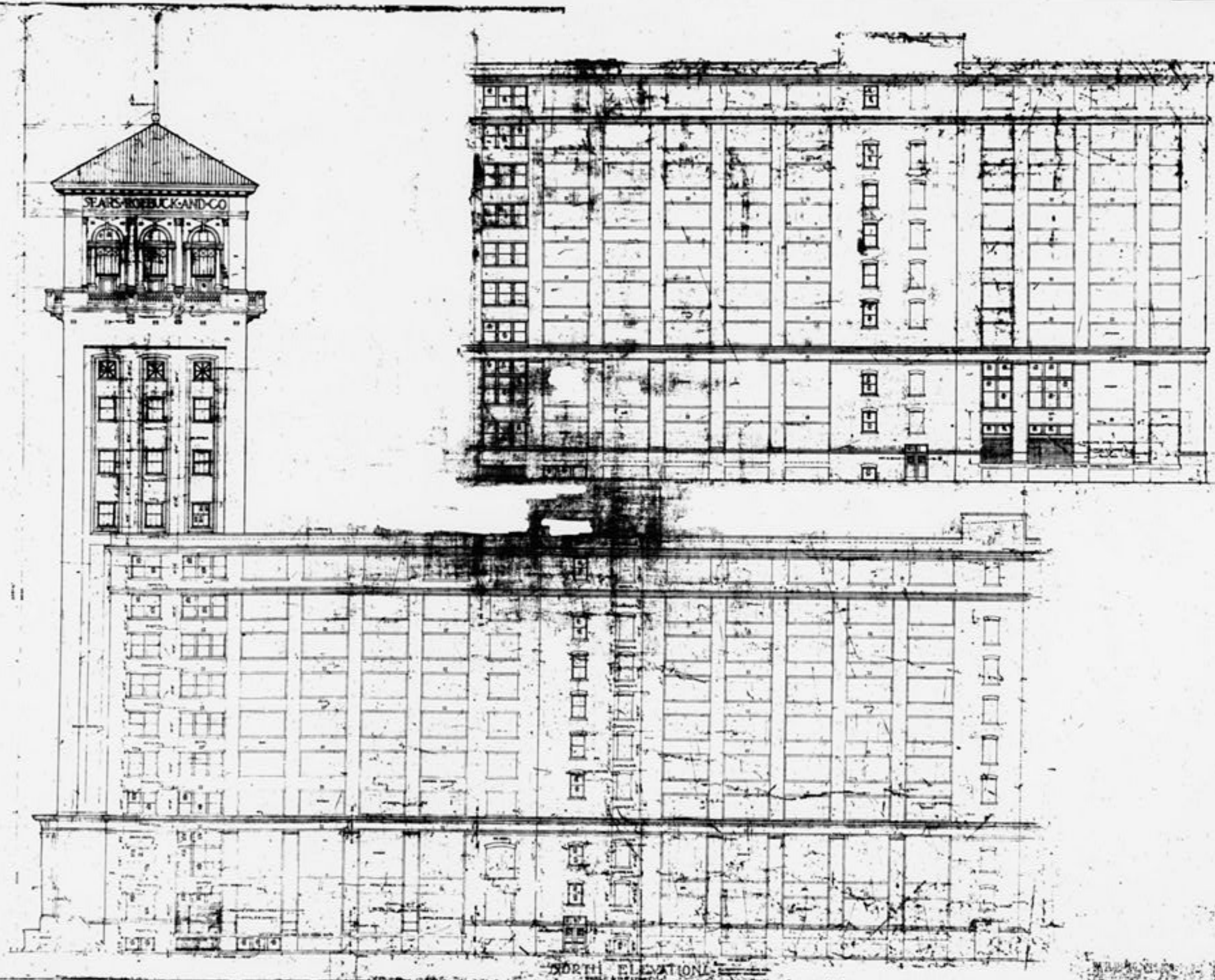


FIRST FLOOR

ROOF PLAN  
TOWER PLANS  
SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"

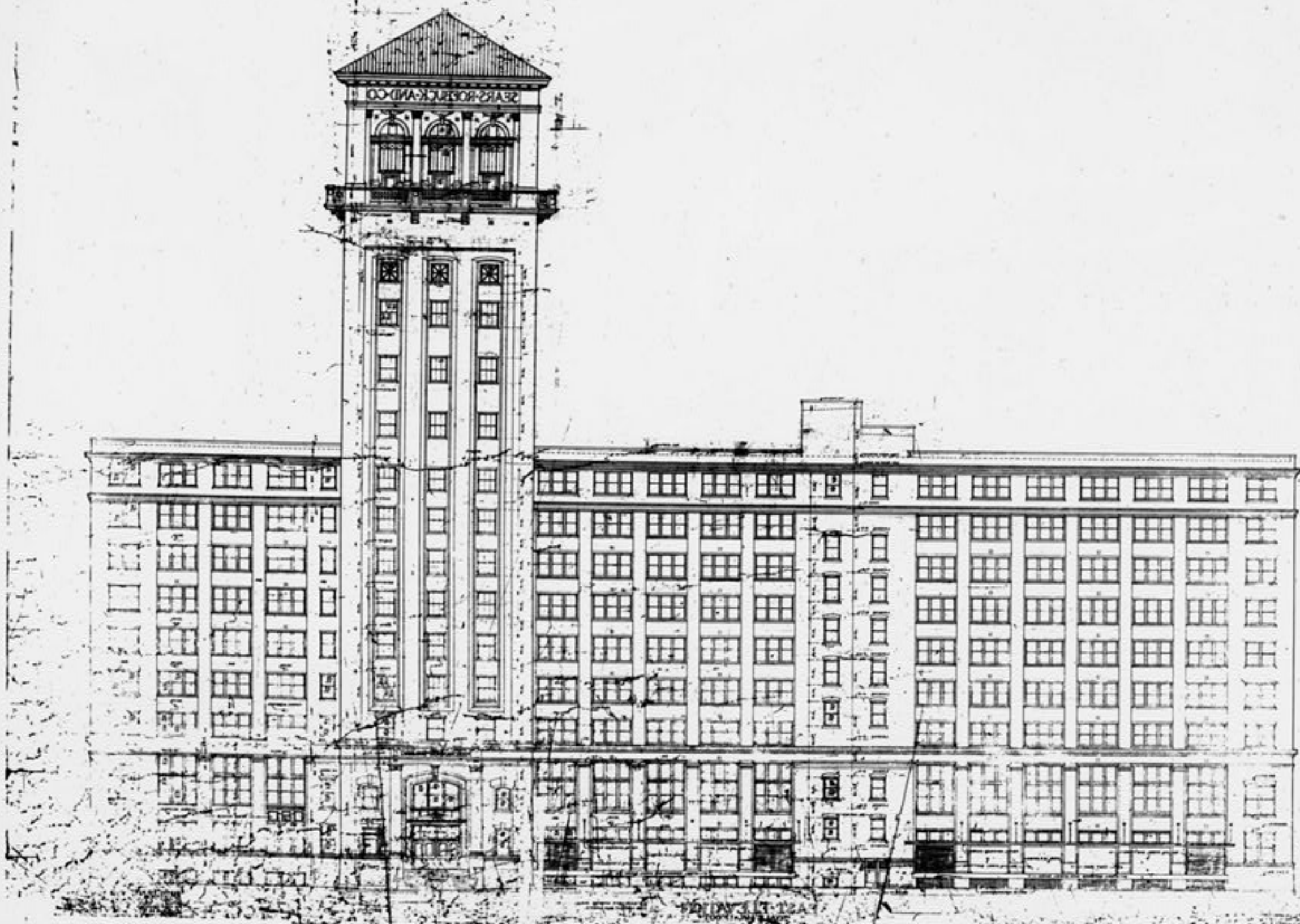
BUILDING DEPT. OF  
NIMMONS & YELSON  
ARCHITECTS CHICAGO

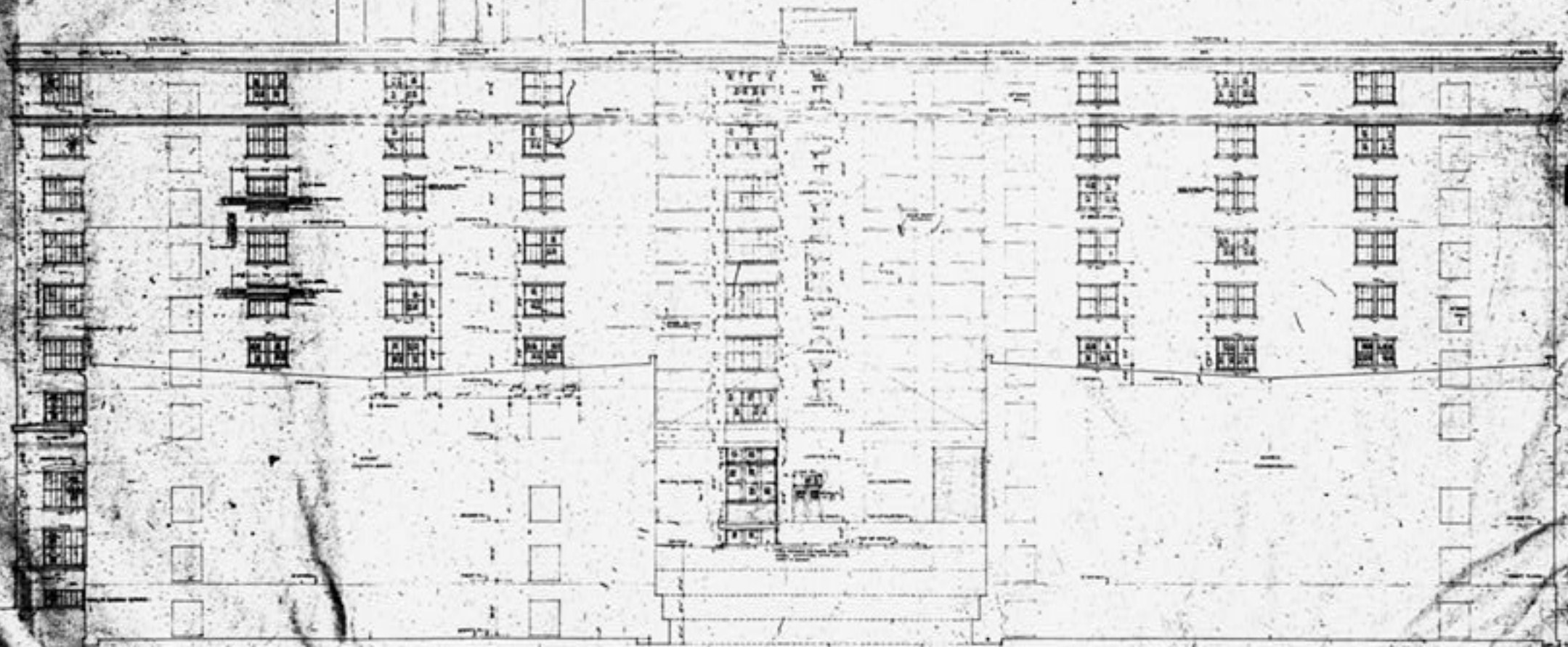












WEST ELEVATION

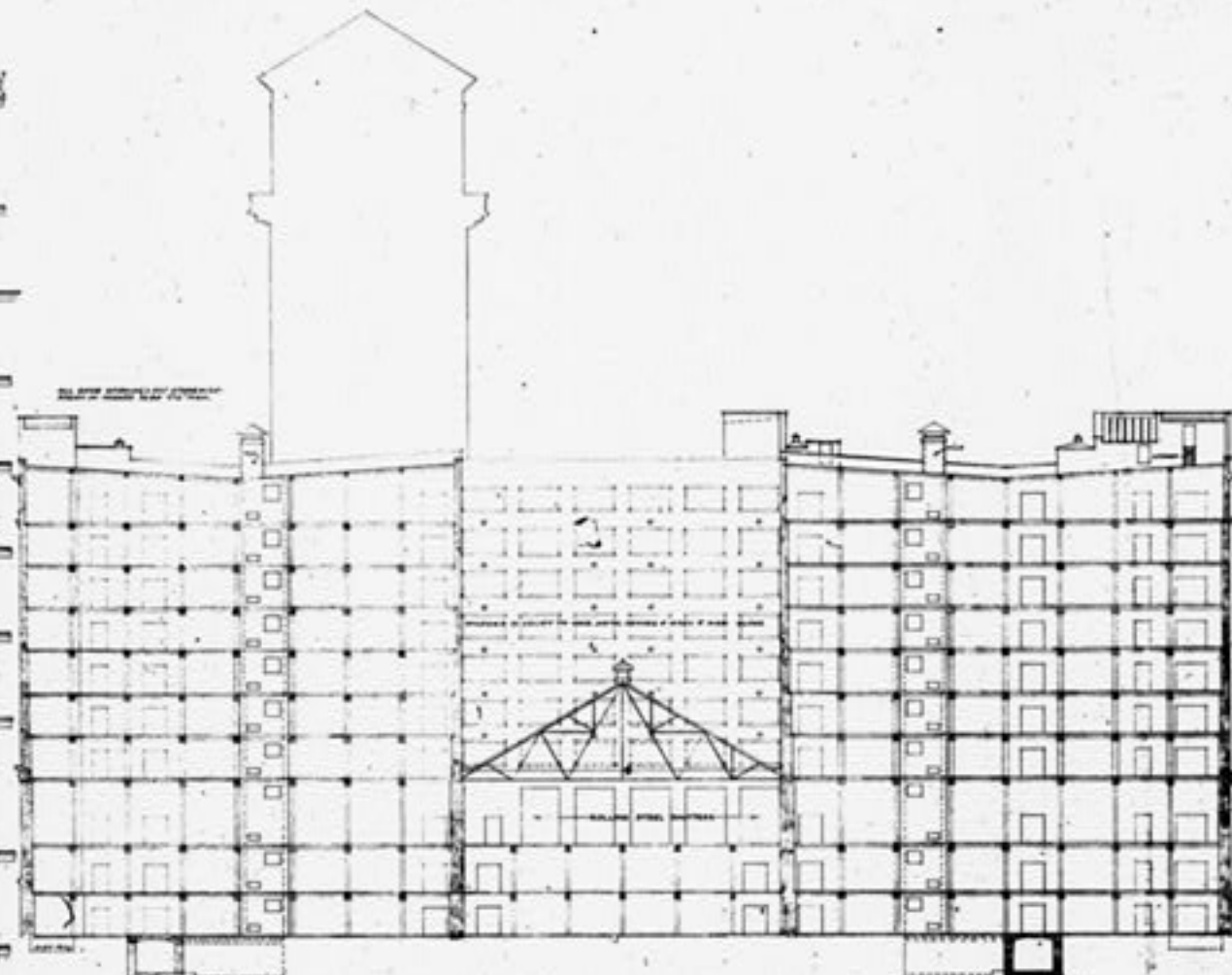
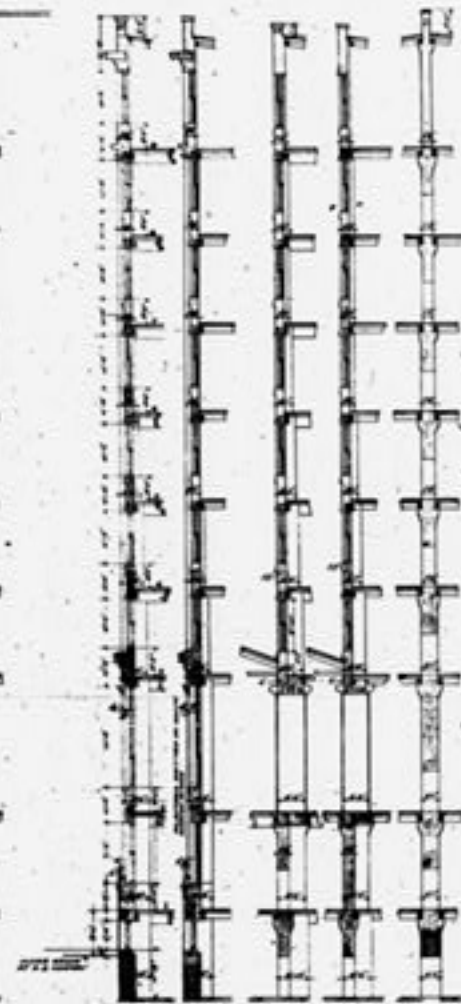
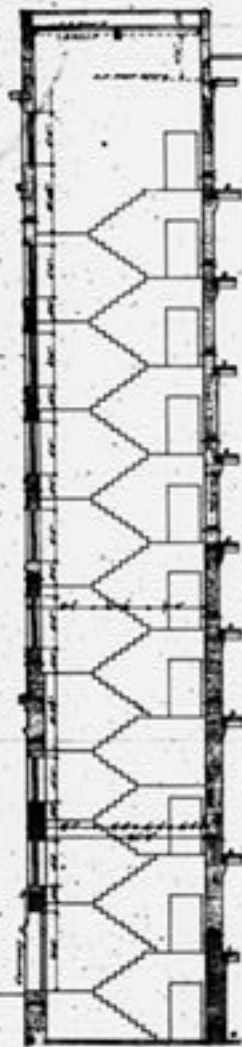
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

DESIGNED BY

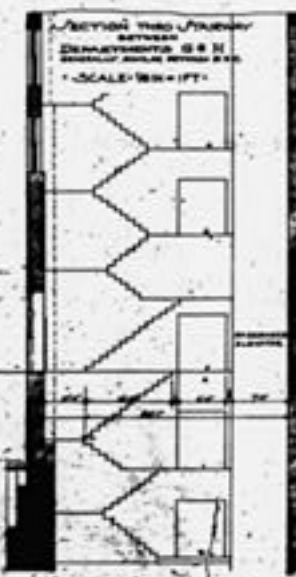
1126

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TRANSVERSE SECTION  
LOOKING EAST



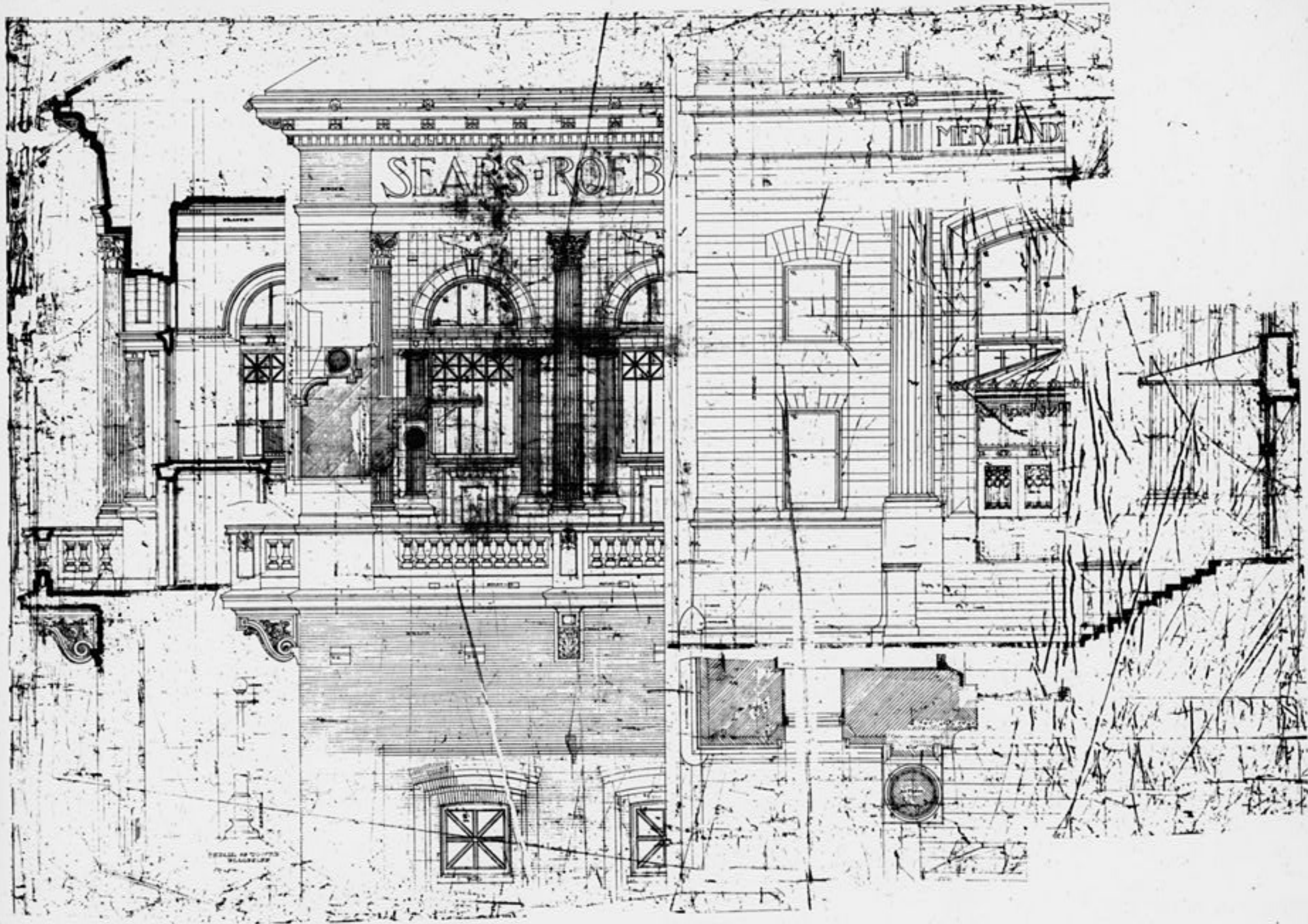
LONGITUDINAL SECTION  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

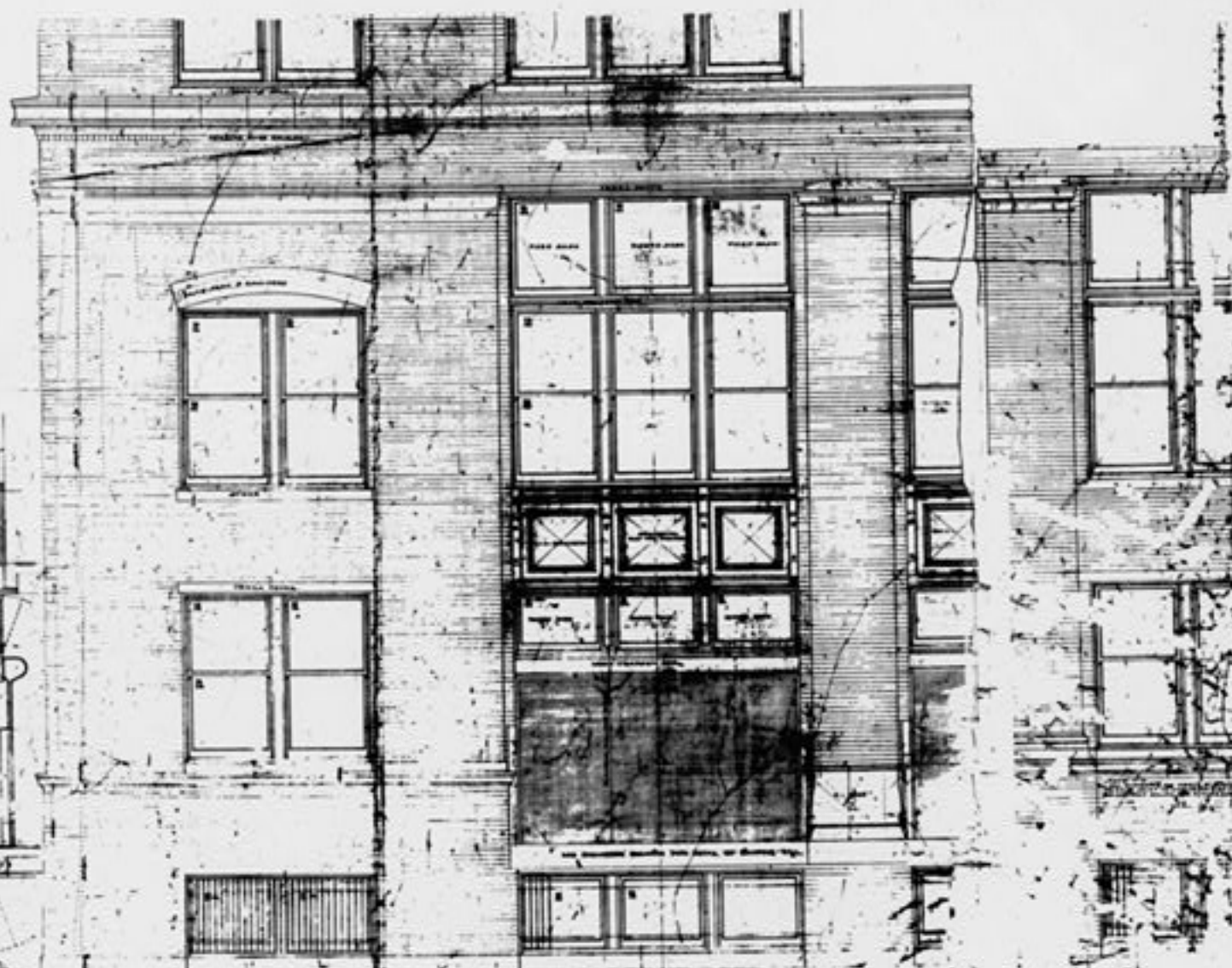
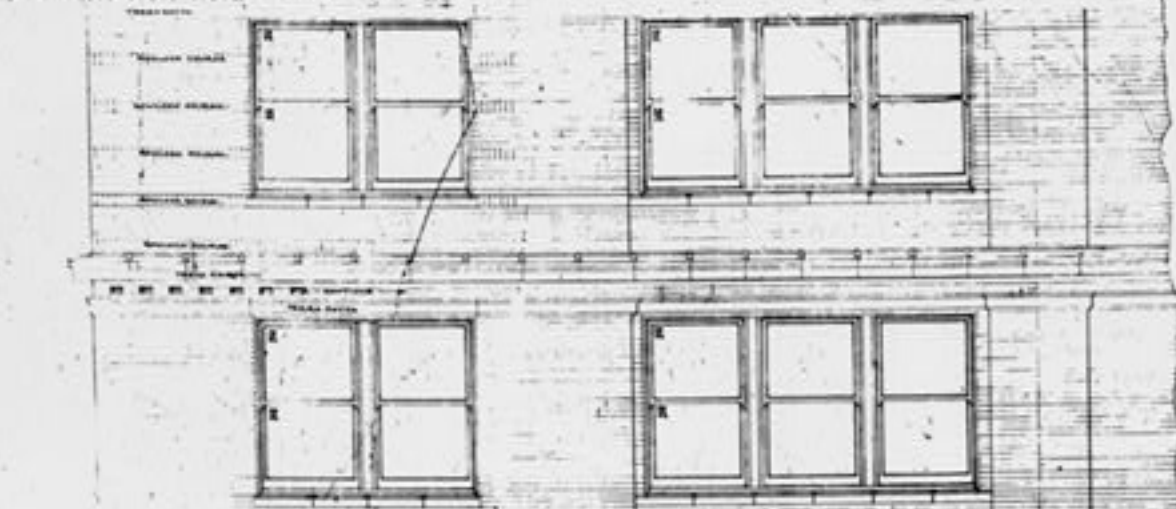


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Section	Material	Thickness
1	Steel	1/2"
2	Steel	3/4"
3	Steel	1"
4	Steel	1 1/4"
5	Steel	1 1/2"
6	Steel	1 3/4"
7	Steel	2"
8	Steel	2 1/4"
9	Steel	2 1/2"
10	Steel	2 3/4"
11	Steel	3"
12	Steel	3 1/4"
13	Steel	3 1/2"
14	Steel	3 3/4"
15	Steel	4"
16	Steel	4 1/4"
17	Steel	4 1/2"
18	Steel	4 3/4"
19	Steel	5"
20	Steel	5 1/4"
21	Steel	5 1/2"
22	Steel	5 3/4"
23	Steel	6"
24	Steel	6 1/4"
25	Steel	6 1/2"
26	Steel	6 3/4"
27	Steel	7"
28	Steel	7 1/4"
29	Steel	7 1/2"
30	Steel	7 3/4"
31	Steel	8"
32	Steel	8 1/4"
33	Steel	8 1/2"
34	Steel	8 3/4"
35	Steel	9"
36	Steel	9 1/4"
37	Steel	9 1/2"
38	Steel	9 3/4"
39	Steel	10"
40	Steel	10 1/4"
41	Steel	10 1/2"
42	Steel	10 3/4"
43	Steel	11"
44	Steel	11 1/4"
45	Steel	11 1/2"
46	Steel	11 3/4"
47	Steel	12"
48	Steel	12 1/4"
49	Steel	12 1/2"
50	Steel	12 3/4"
51	Steel	13"
52	Steel	13 1/4"
53	Steel	13 1/2"
54	Steel	13 3/4"
55	Steel	14"
56	Steel	14 1/4"
57	Steel	14 1/2"
58	Steel	14 3/4"
59	Steel	15"
60	Steel	15 1/4"
61	Steel	15 1/2"
62	Steel	15 3/4"
63	Steel	16"
64	Steel	16 1/4"
65	Steel	16 1/2"
66	Steel	16 3/4"
67	Steel	17"
68	Steel	17 1/4"
69	Steel	17 1/2"
70	Steel	17 3/4"
71	Steel	18"
72	Steel	18 1/4"
73	Steel	18 1/2"
74	Steel	18 3/4"
75	Steel	19"
76	Steel	19 1/4"
77	Steel	19 1/2"
78	Steel	19 3/4"
79	Steel	20"
80	Steel	20 1/4"
81	Steel	20 1/2"
82	Steel	20 3/4"
83	Steel	21"
84	Steel	21 1/4"
85	Steel	21 1/2"
86	Steel	21 3/4"
87	Steel	22"
88	Steel	22 1/4"
89	Steel	22 1/2"
90	Steel	22 3/4"
91	Steel	23"
92	Steel	23 1/4"
93	Steel	23 1/2"
94	Steel	23 3/4"
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96	Steel	24 1/4"
97	Steel	24 1/2"
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99	Steel	25"
100	Steel	25 1/4"
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112	Steel	28 1/4"
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123	Steel	31"
124	Steel	31 1/4"
125	Steel	31 1/2"
126	Steel	31 3/4"
127	Steel	32"
128	Steel	32 1/4"
129	Steel	32 1/2"
130	Steel	32 3/4"
131	Steel	33"
132	Steel	33 1/4"
133	Steel	33 1/2"
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135	Steel	34"
136	Steel	34 1/4"
137	Steel	34 1/2"
138	Steel	34 3/4"
139	Steel	35"
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143	Steel	36"
144	Steel	36 1/4"
145	Steel	36 1/2"
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149	Steel	37 1/2"
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161	Steel	40 1/2"
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165	Steel	41 1/2"
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169	Steel	42 1/2"
170	Steel	42 3/4"
171	Steel	43"
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173	Steel	43 1/2"
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176	Steel	44 1/4"
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181	Steel	45 1/2"
182	Steel	45 3/4"
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185	Steel	46 1/2"
186	Steel	46 3/4"
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188	Steel	47 1/4"
189	Steel	47 1/2"
190	Steel	47 3/4"
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213	Steel	53 1/2"
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224	Steel	56 1/4"
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229	Steel	57 1/2"
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231	Steel	58"
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234	Steel	58 3/4"
235	Steel	59"
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237	Steel	59 1/2"
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239	Steel	60"
240	Steel	60 1/4"
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262	Steel	65 3/4"
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272	Steel	68 1/4"
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275	Steel	69"
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277	Steel	69 1/2"
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280	Steel	70 1/4"
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284	Steel	71 1/4"
285	Steel	71 1/2"
286	Steel	71 3/4"
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293	Steel	73 1/2"
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295	Steel	74"
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385	Steel	96 1/2"
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387	Steel	97"
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389	Steel	97 1/2"
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393	Steel	98 1/2"
394	Steel	98 3/4"
395	Steel	99"
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400	Steel	100 1/4"
401	Steel	100 1/2"
402	Steel	100 3/4"
403	Steel	101"
404	Steel	101 1/4"
405	Steel	101 1/2"
406	Steel	101 3/4"
407	Steel	102"
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409	Steel	102 1/2"
410	Steel	102 3/4"
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413	Steel	103 1/2"
414	Steel	103 3/4"
415	Steel	104"
416	Steel</	

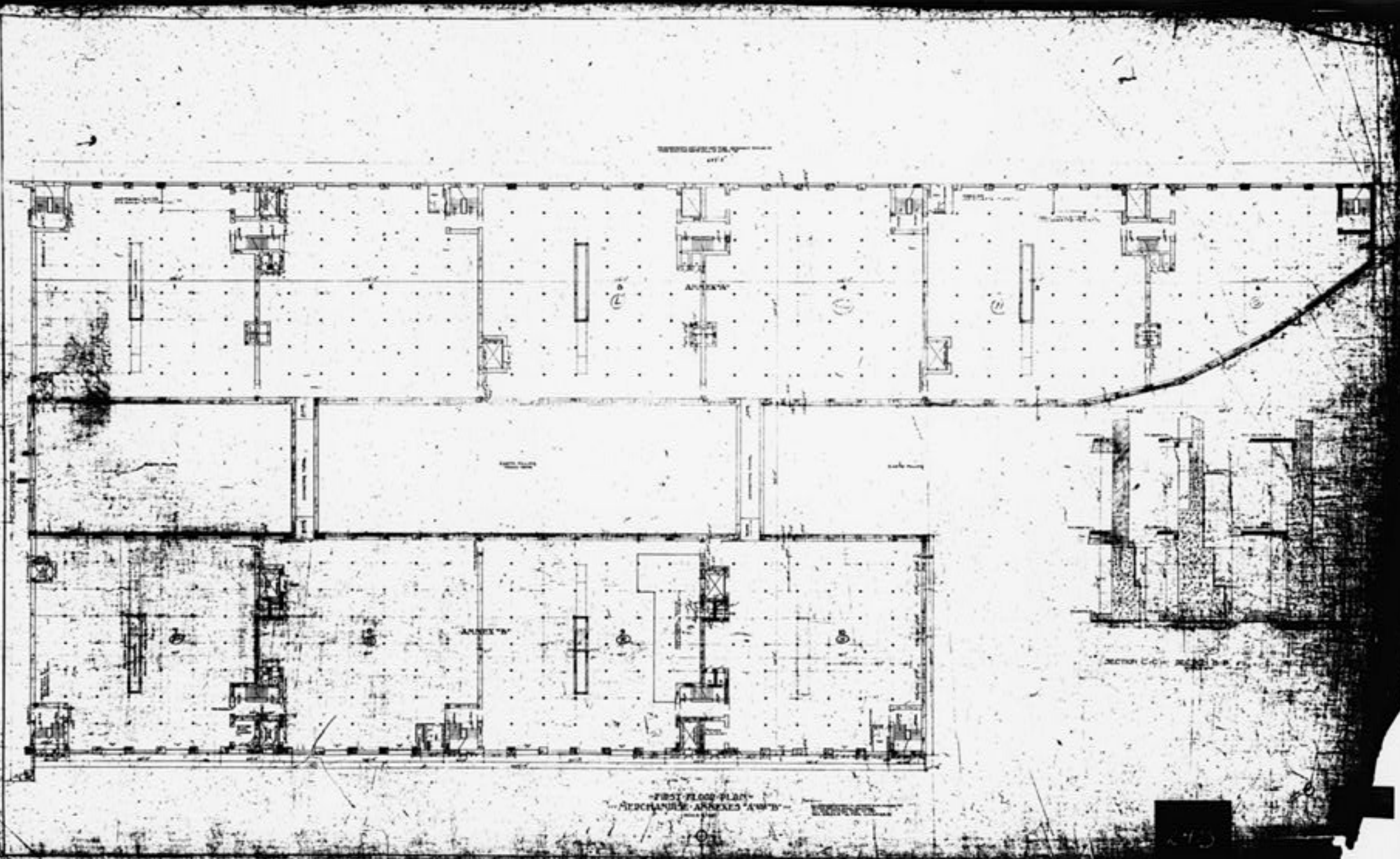






ONE HALF INCH SCALE DETAIL  
 HARVARD ST. ELEVATION  
 HOMAS ST. ELEVATION SIMILAR  
 CHARLES HOBBS & CO.



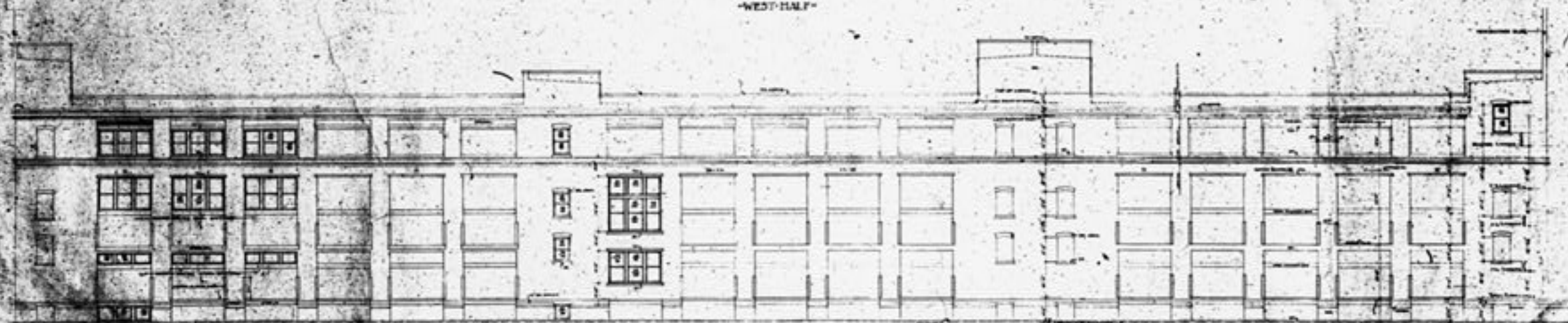


FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
MERCHANDISE ANNEXES A AND B

SECTION C-C - SEE NOTE ON P. 10



-WEST HALF-

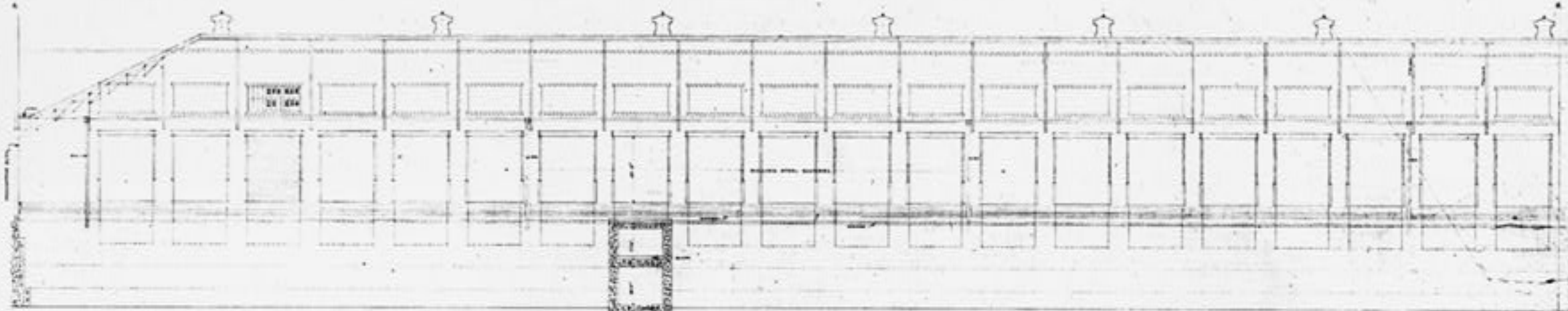


-EAST HALF-  
-MERCHANDISE ANNEX "A"-  
-SOUTH ELEV-

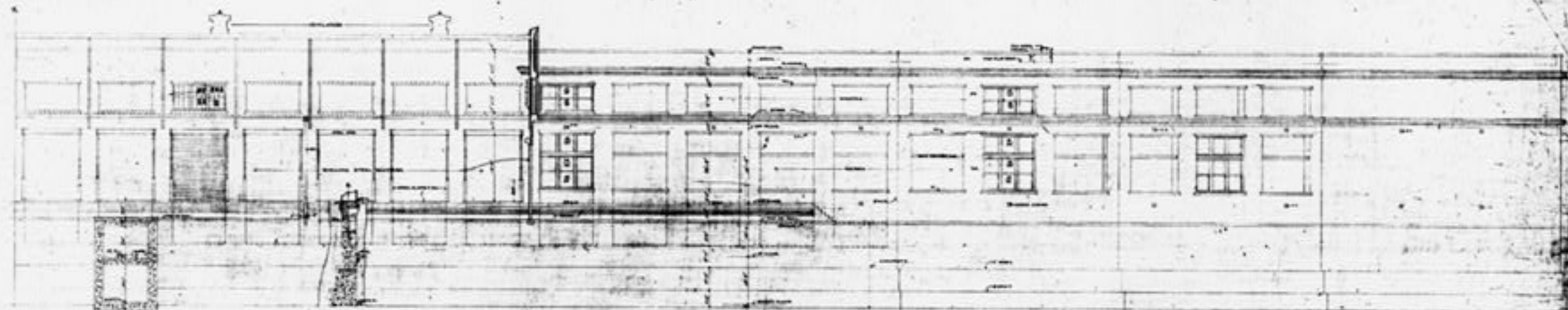
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RECORDING IN HIS OFFICE  
JANUARY 10, 1900  
ARCHITECTS - CHICAGO





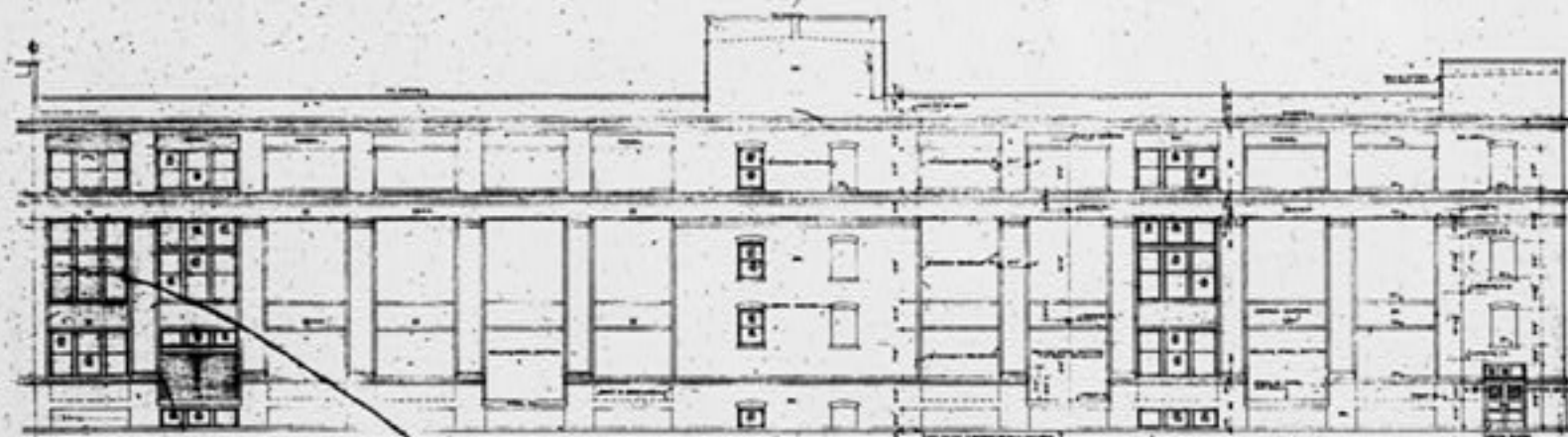
-EAST HALF-



-WEST HALF-  
-MERCHANDISE ANNEX A-  
-NORTH ELEV-

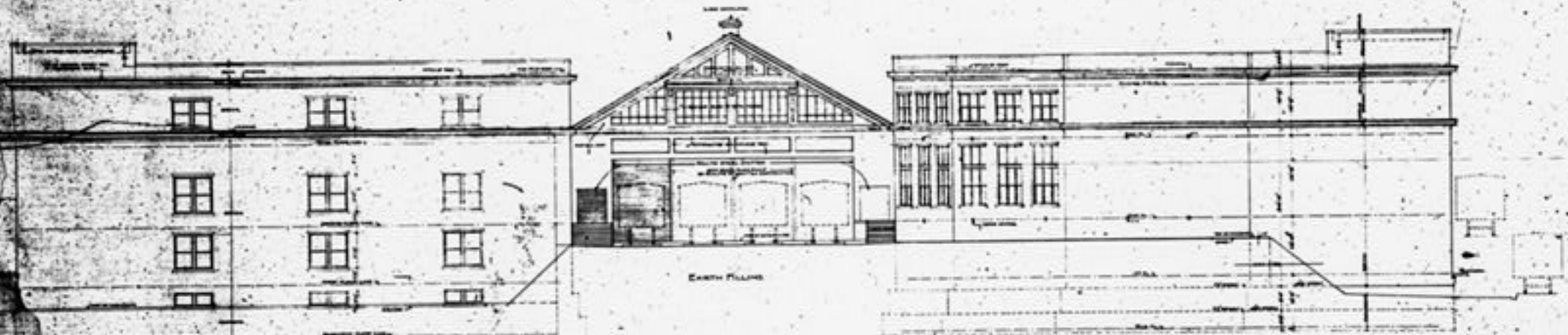


-EAST HALF-



-WEST HALF-  
-MERCHANDISE ANNEX "B"-  
-NORTH ELEV-

SEE PLAN FOR LOCATION OF  
BUILDING



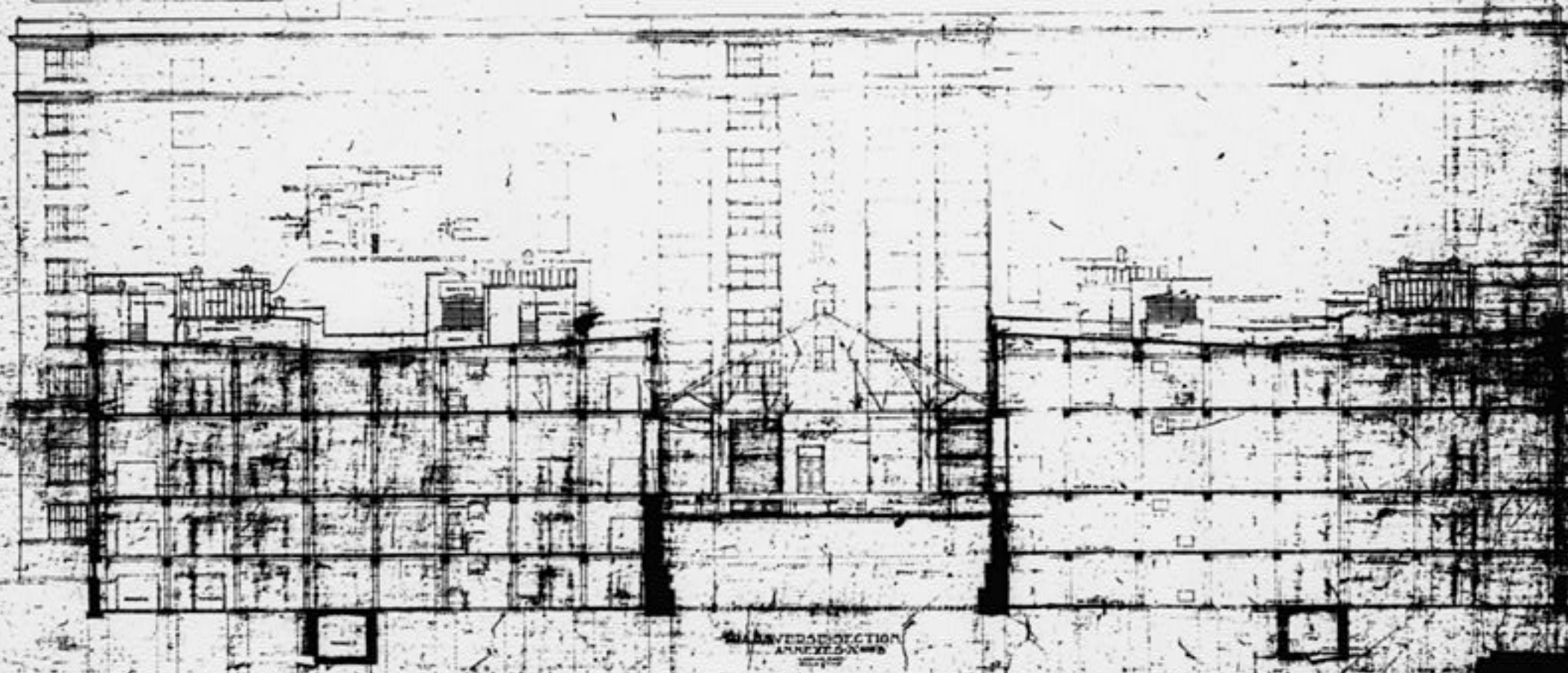
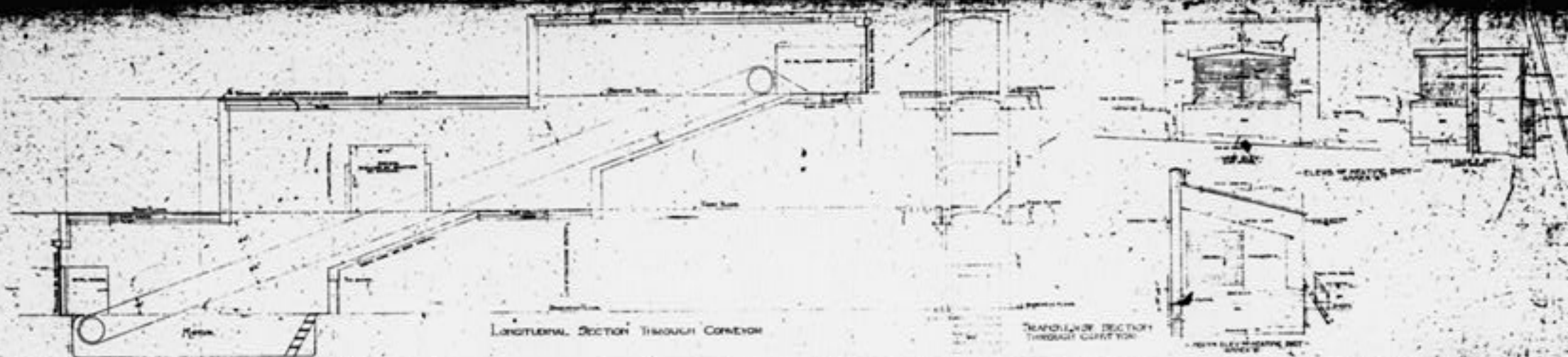
ANNEX 'B'

ANNEX 'A'

WEST SIDE  
MERCHANDISE ANNEX

BUILDING FOR THE  
"HARVARD UNIVERSITY"  
ARCHITECTS - BUREAU

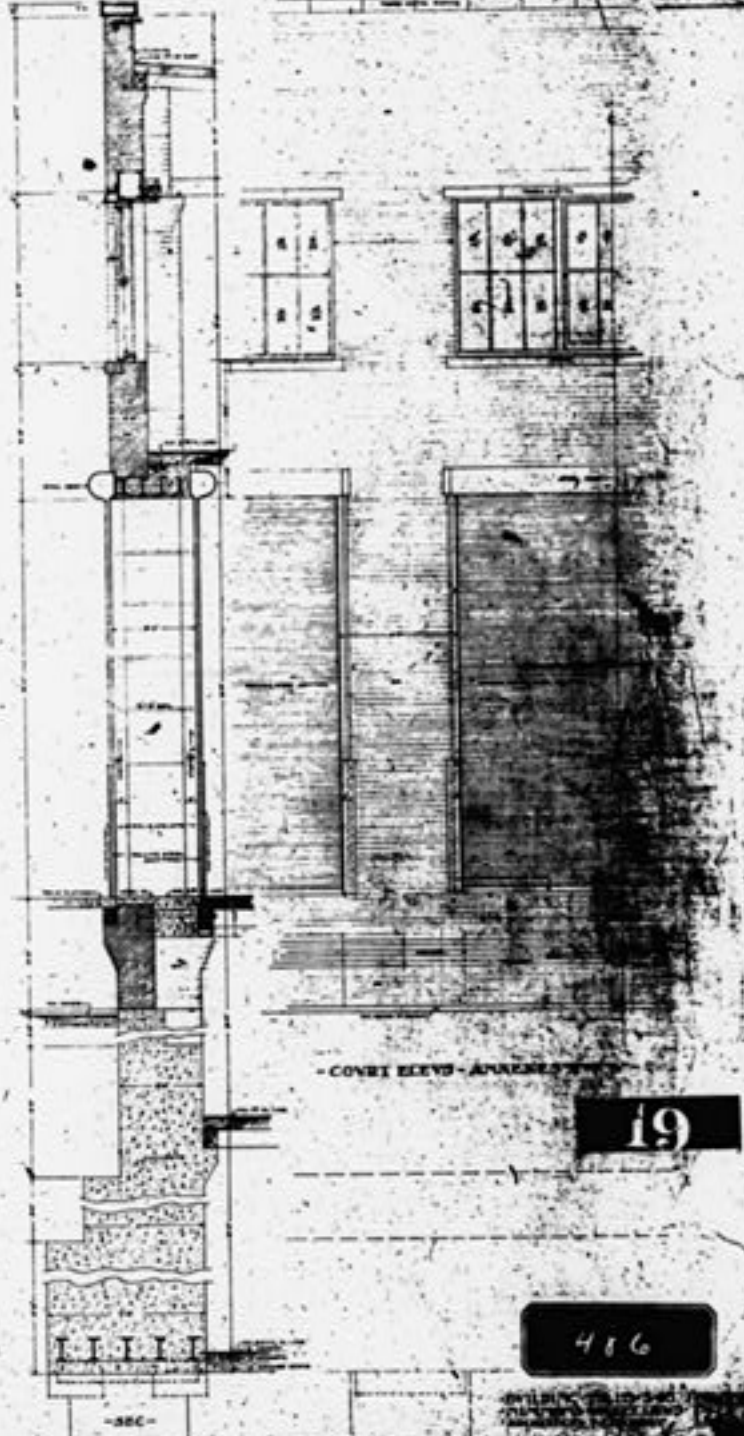
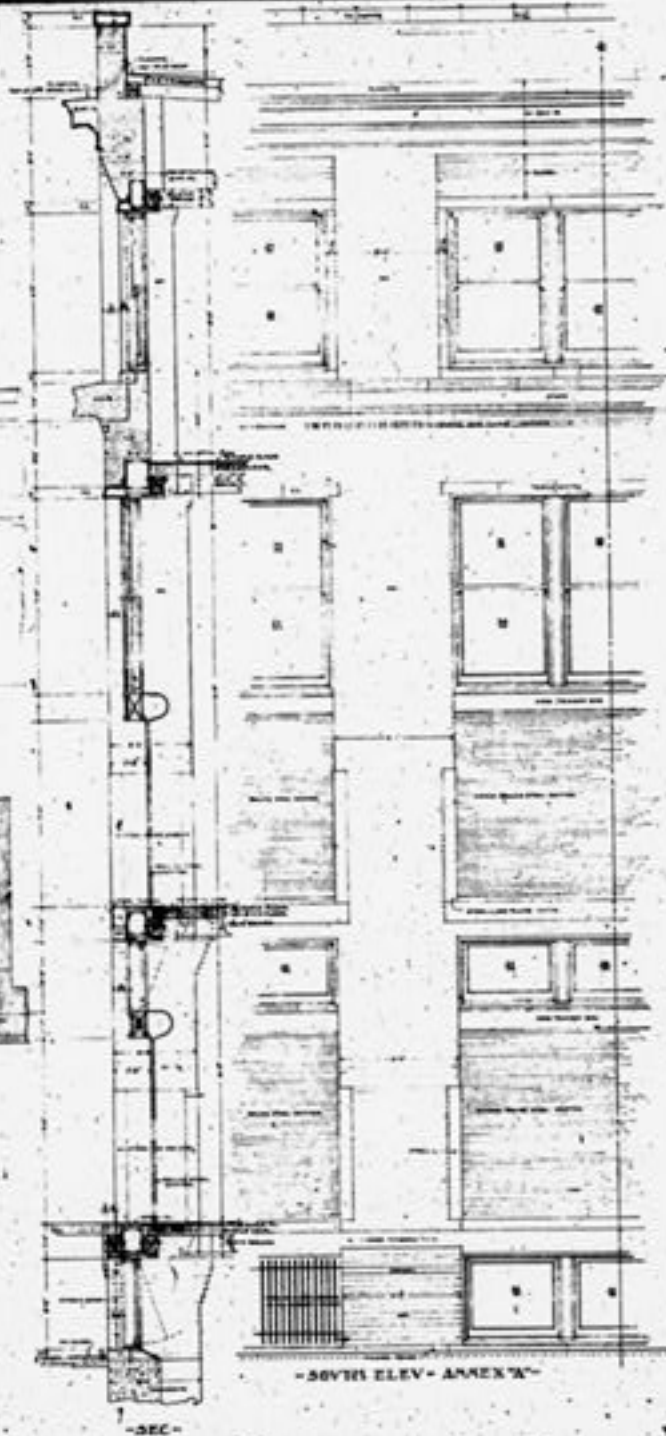
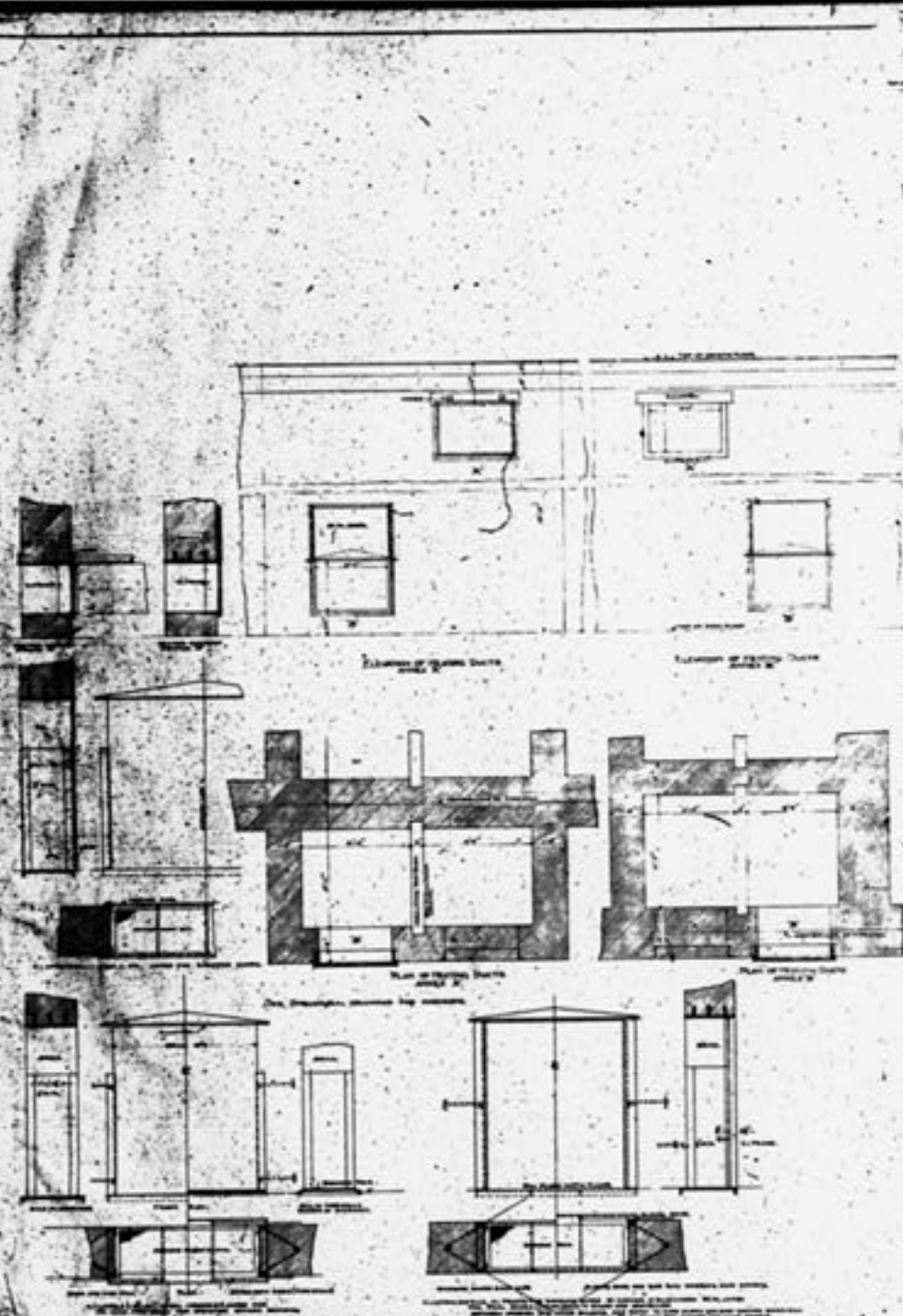


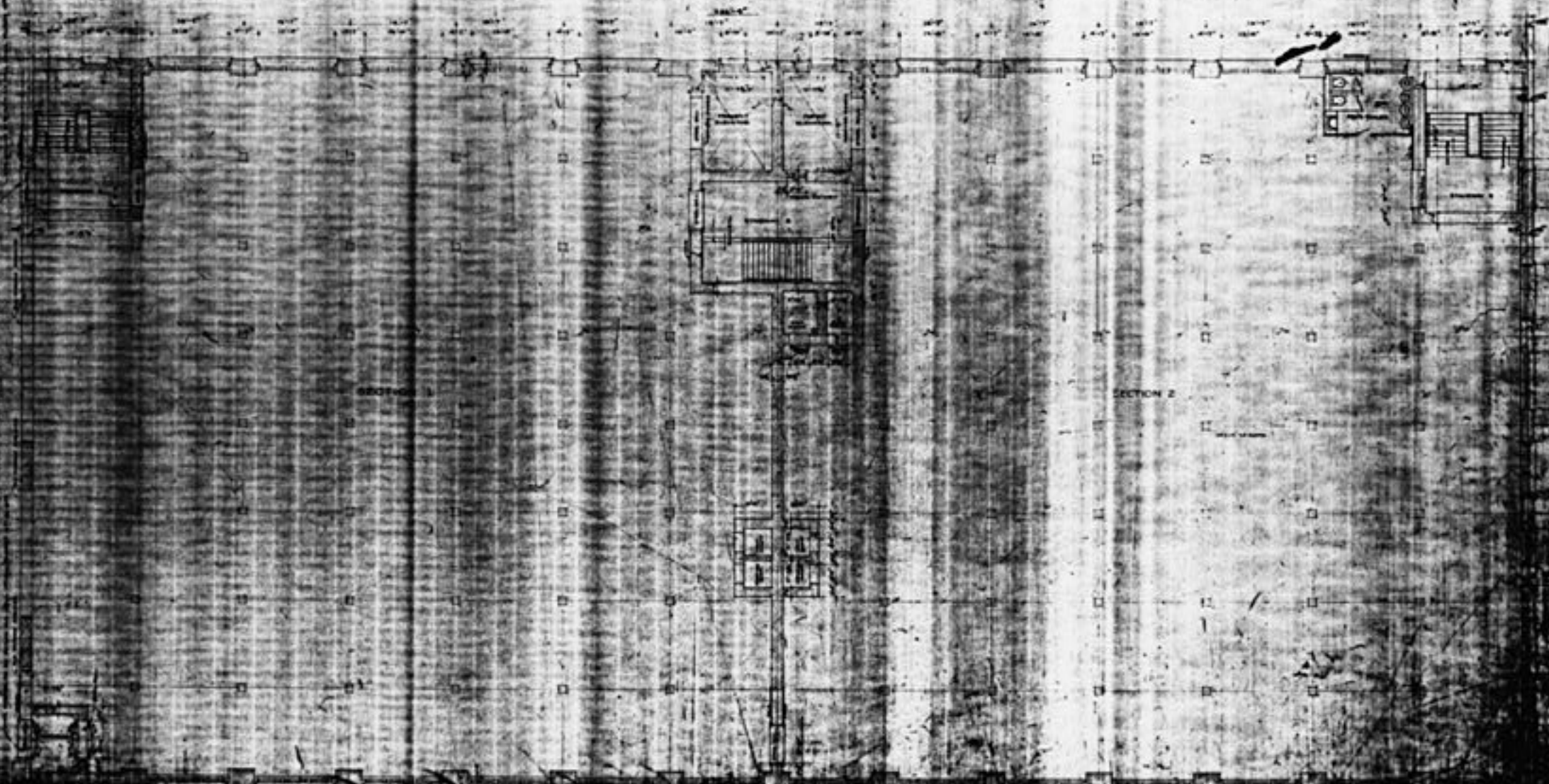


TRANSVERSE SECTION  
ANNEX B - 1918

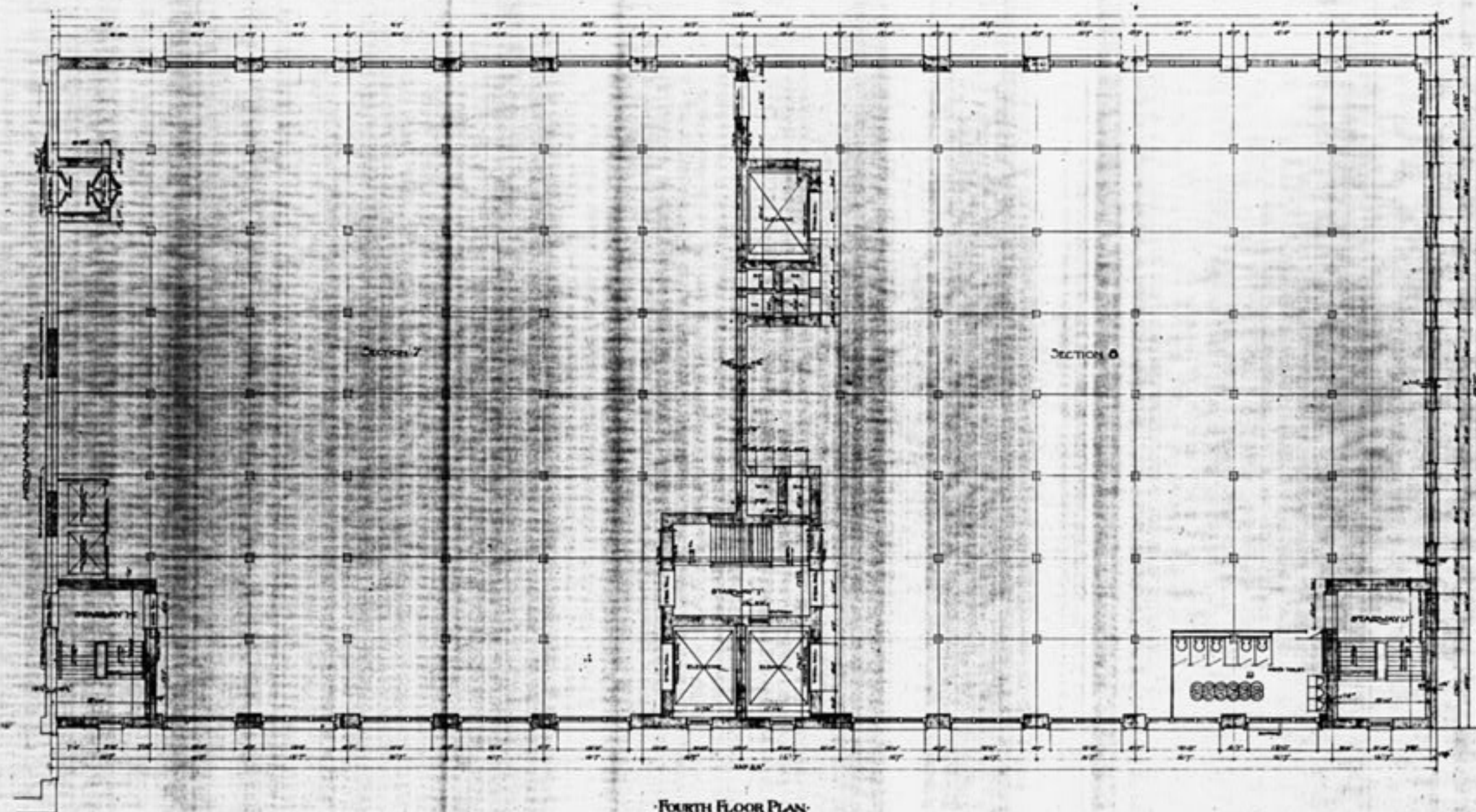
BUILDING NO. 100-1-13  
ARCHITECTS - CHICAGO





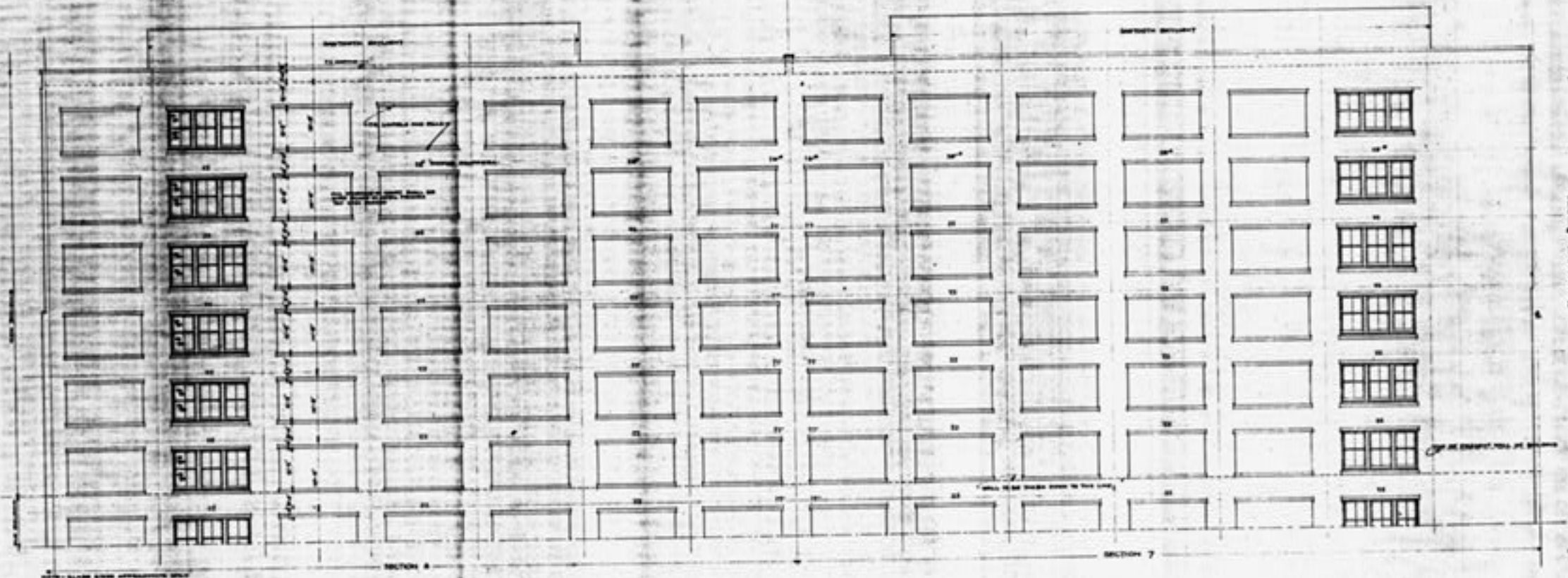






**FOURTH FLOOR PLAN**  
SECTIONS 7 AND 8 ANNEX BY  
CITY OF CHICAGO

290

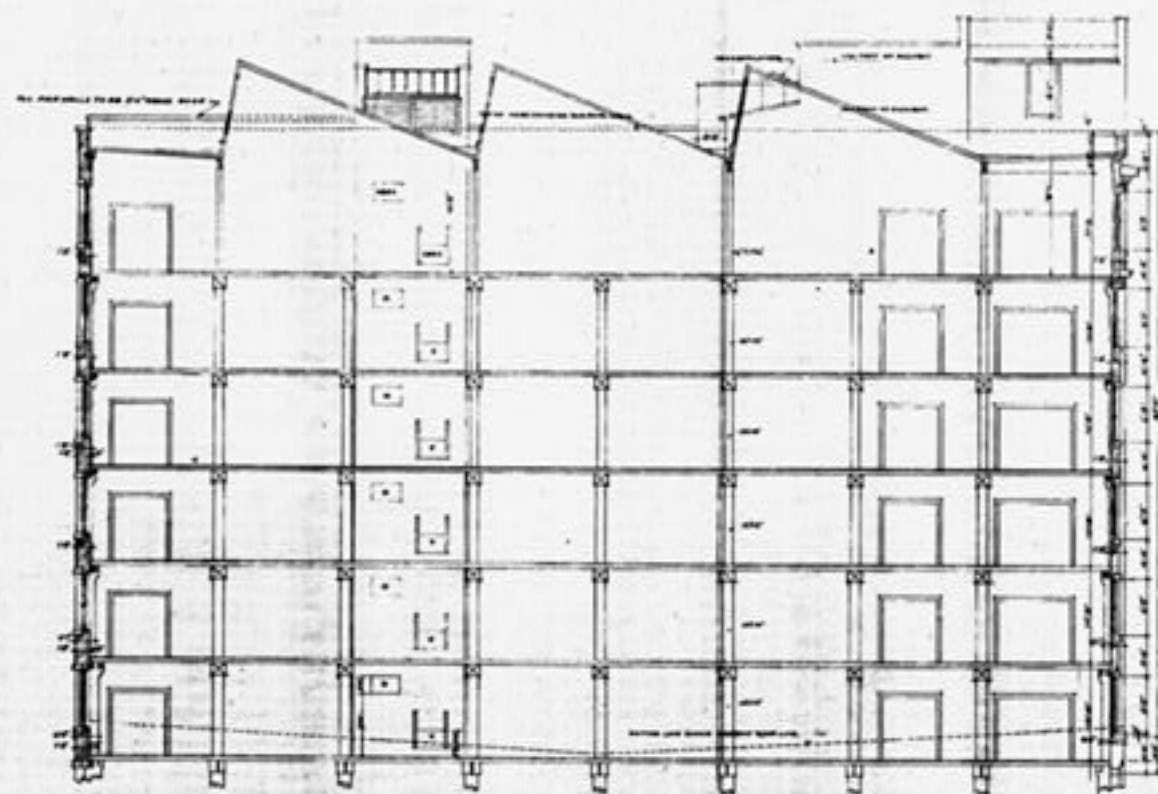


**SOUTH ELEVATION OF SECTIONS 7 AND 8 ANNEX B**  
 NORTH ELEVATION OF SECTIONS 1 AND 2 ANNEX A TO BE SAME AS ABOVE, EXCEPT REVERSED  
 (SEE PLAN SHEET)

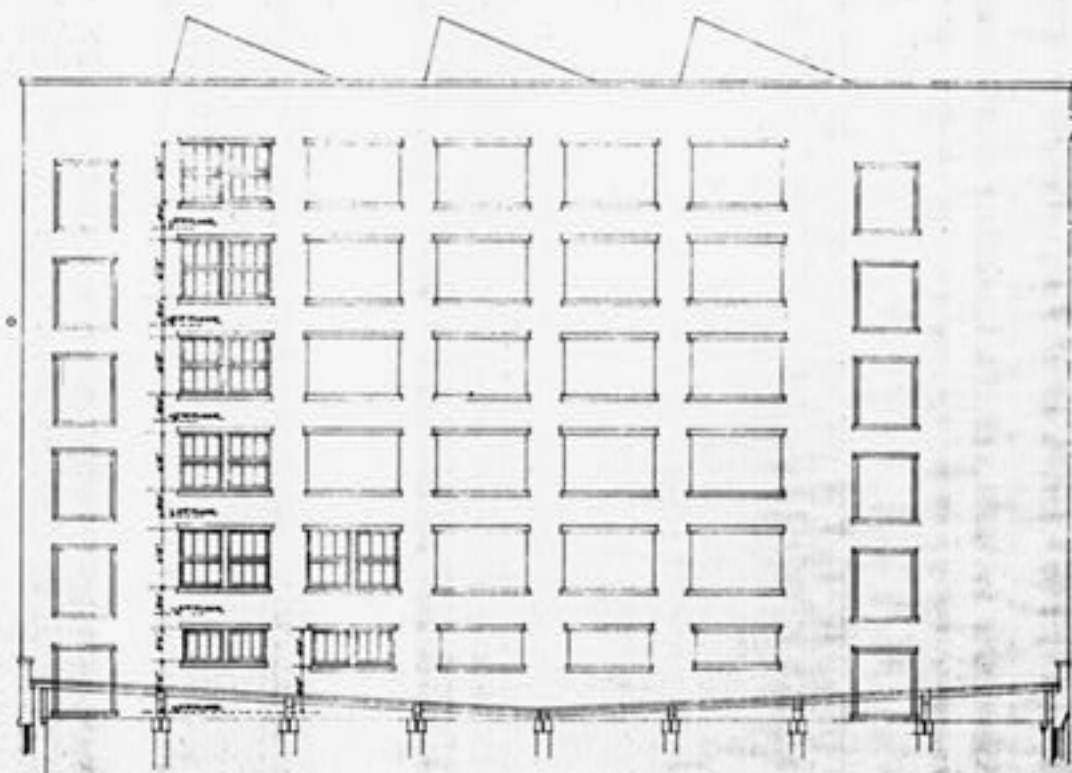
298

COMPLETION OF MICHIGAN AVE. PROJECT  
 A AND D SECTIONS 1, 2 AND 8 AT HARVARD  
 AND 3600 N. W. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, I.  
 SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY  
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



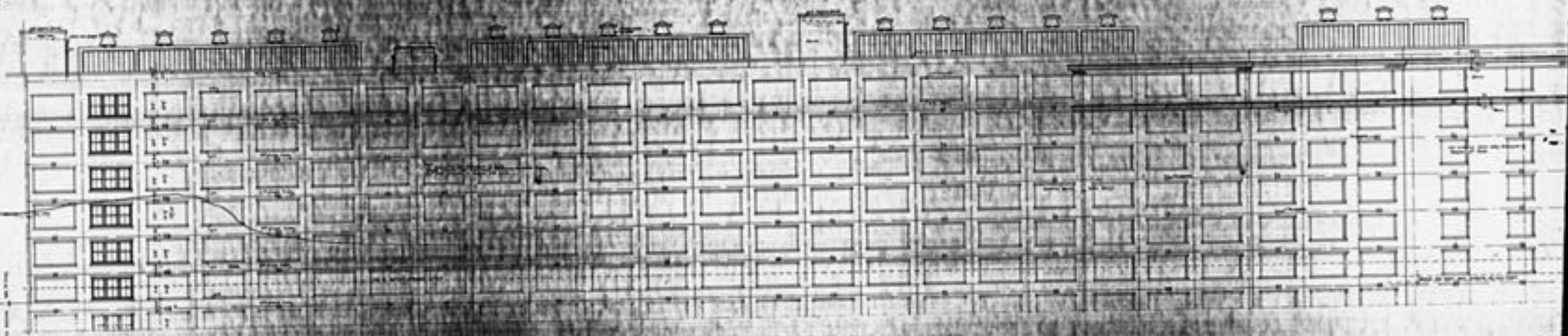


CROSS SECTION OF ANNEX A.  
 WEST SECTION OF ANNEX B. SIMILAR.  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



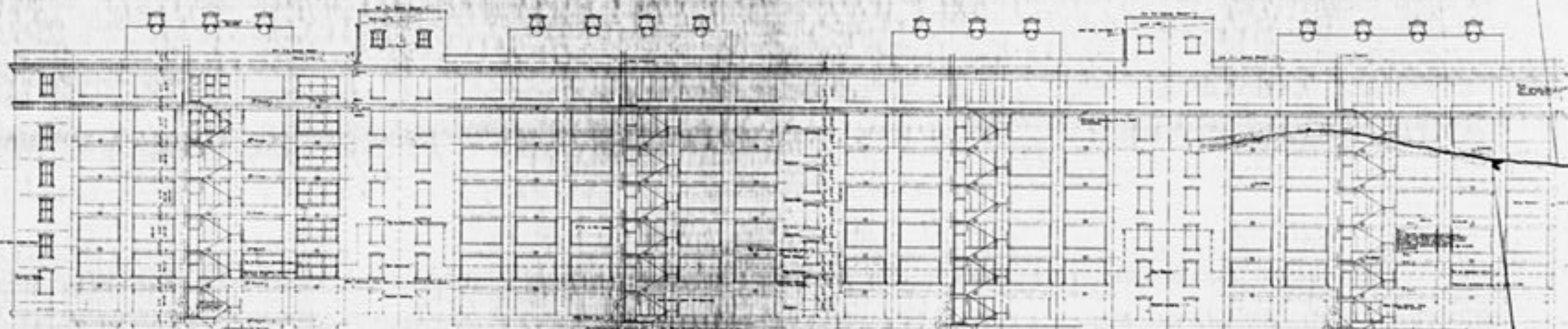
WEST ELEVATION OF ANNEX A.  
 WEST ELEVATION OF ANNEX B. SAME AS ANNEX A. EXCEPT REVERSED.  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"





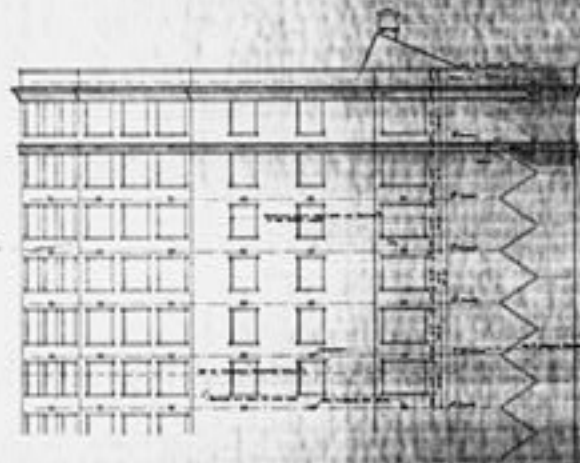
North  
Admission 14.00  
State Building  
General C. H. H. H.  
General C. H. H. H.



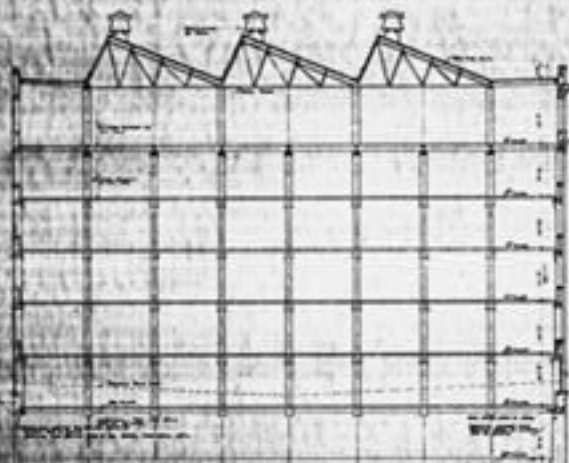


South Elevation  
Addition to Section 3476 A  
J. H. Rogers, Architect  
Chicago, Ill.

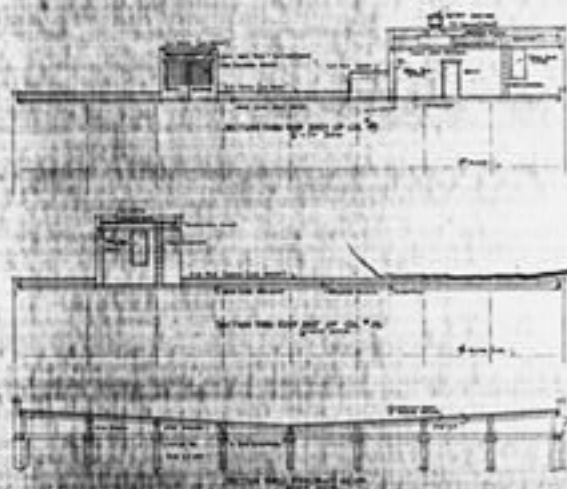




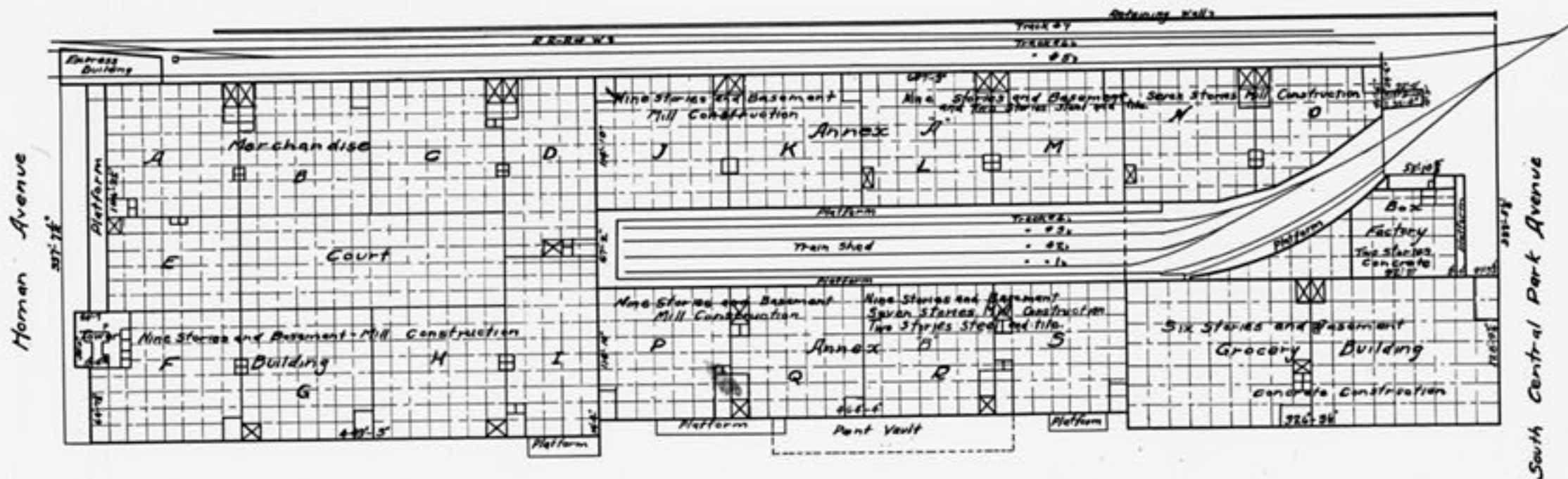
PLAN OF

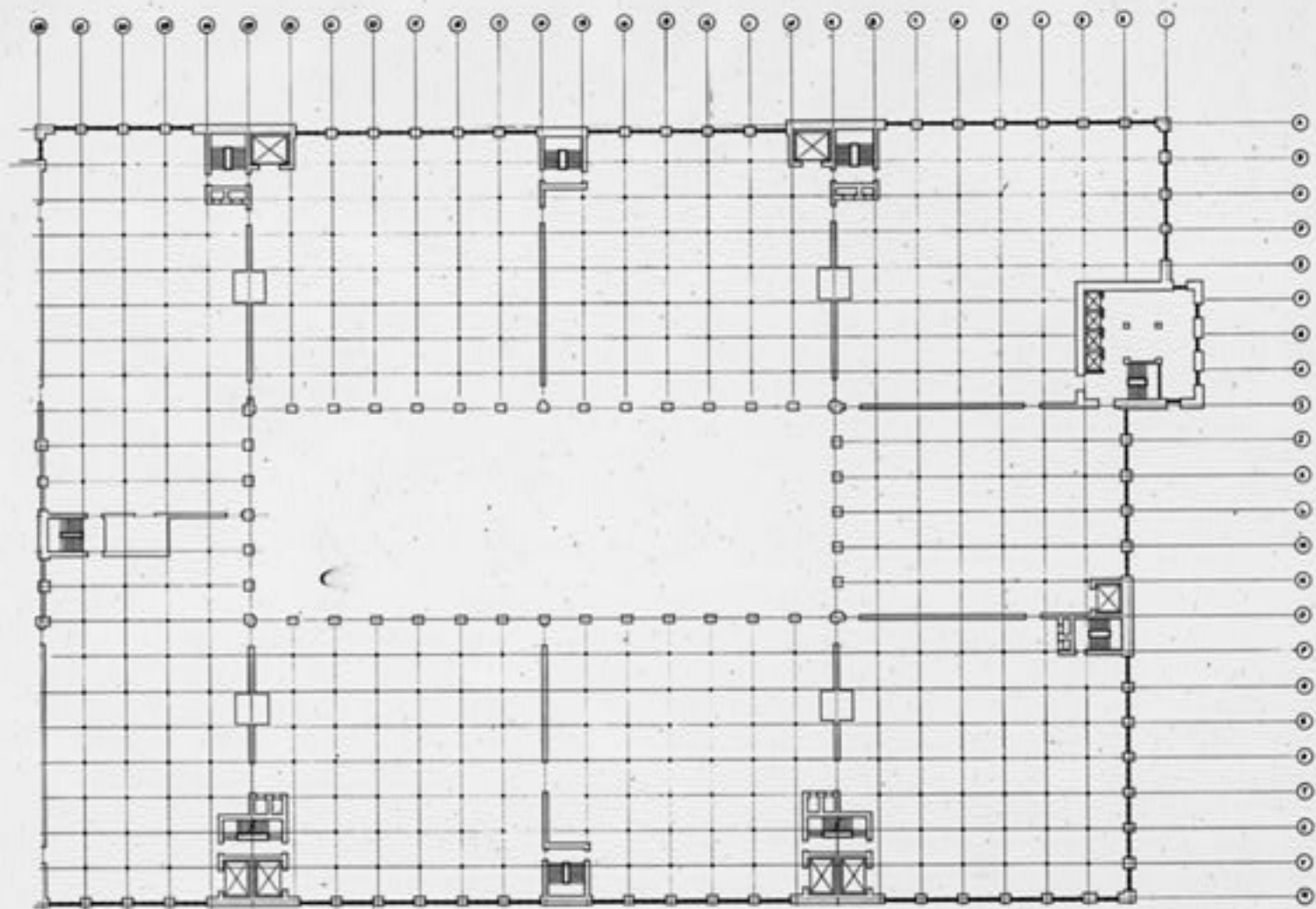


PLAN OF



SECTION TO SHOW  
SEAL AIRLOCK OF  
DOORWAY



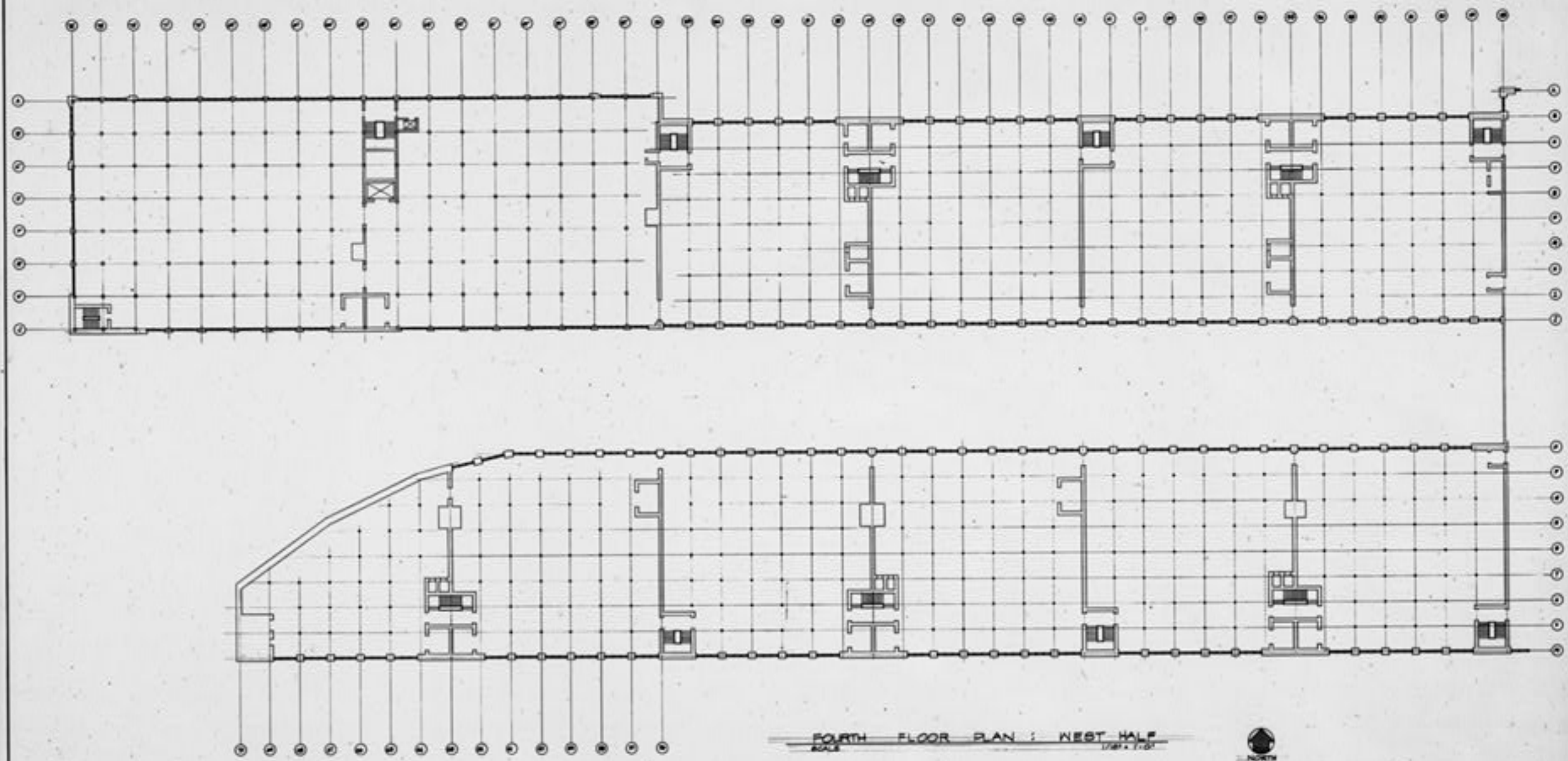


FOURTH FLOOR PLAN - EAST HALF



CATALOG ORDER BUILDING

	NO. 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500 501 502 503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510 511 512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539 540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674 675 676 677 678 679 680 681 682 683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700 701 702 703 704 705 706 707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719 720 721 722 723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740 741 742 743 744 745 746 747 748 749 750 751 752 753 754 755 756 757 758 759 760 761 762 763 764 765 766 767 768 769 770 771 772 773 774 775 776 777 778 779 780 781 782 783 784 785 786 787 788 789 790 791 792 793 794 795 796 797 798 799 800 801 802 803 804 805 806 807 808 809 810 811 812 813 814 815 816 817 818 819 820 821 822 823 824 825 826 827 828 829 830 831 832 833 834 835 836 837 838 839 840 841 842 843 844 845 846 847 848 849 850 851 852 853 854 855 856 857 858 859 860 861 862 863 864 865 866 867 868 869 870 871 872 873 874 875 876 877 878 879 880 881 882 883 884 885 886 887 888 889 890 891 892 893 894 895 896 897 898 899 900 901 902 903 904 905 906 907 908 909 910 911 912 913 914 915 916 917 918 919 920 921 922 923 924 925 926 927 928 929 930 931 932 933 934 935 936 937 938 939 940 941 942 943 944 945 946 947 948 949 950 951 952 953 954 955 956 957 958 959 960 961 962 963 964 965 966 967 968 969 970 971 972 973 974 975 976 977 978 979 980 981 982 983 984 985 986 987 988 989 990 991 992 993 994 995 996 997 998 999 1000 1001 1002 1003 1004 1005 1006 1007 1008 1009 1010 1011 1012 1013 1014 1015 1016 1017 1018 1019 1020 1021 1022 1023 1024 1025 1026 1027 1028 1029 1030 1031 1032 1033 1034 1035 1036 1037 1038 1039 1040 1041 1042 1043 1044 1045 1046 1047 1048 1049 1050 1051 1052 1053 1054 1055 1056 1057 1058 1059 1060 1061 1062 1063 1064 1065 1066 1067 1068 1069 1070 1071 1072 1073 1074 1075 1076 1077 1078 1079 1080 1081 1082 1083 1084 1085 1086 1087 1088 1089 1090 1091 1092 1093 1094 1095 1096 1097 1098 1099 1100 1101 1102 1103 1104 1105 1106 1107 1108 1109 1110 1111 1112 1113 1114 1115 1116 1117 1118 1119 1120 1121 1122 1123 1124 1125 1126 1127 1128 1129 1130 1131 1132 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 1139 1140 1141 1142 1143 1144 1145 1146 1147 1148 1149 1150 1151 1152 1153 1154 1155 1156 1157 1158 1159 1160 1161 1162 1163 1164 1165 1166 1167 1168 1169 1170 1171 1172 1173 1174 1175 1176 1177 1178 1179 1180 1181 1182 1183 1184 1185 1186 1187 1188 1189 1190 1191 1192 1193 1194 1195 1196 1197 1198 1199 1200 1201 1202 1203 1204 1205 1206 1207 1208 1209 1210 1211 1212 1213 1214 1215 1216 1217 1218 1219 1220 1221 1222 1223 1224 1225 1226 1227 1228 1229 1230 1231 1232 1233 1234 1235 1236 1237 1238 1239 1240 1241 1242 1243 1244 1245 1246 1247 1248 1249 1250 1251 1252 1253 1254 1255 1256 1257 1258 1259 1260 1261 1262 1263 1264 1265 1266 1267 1268 1269 1270 1271 1272 1273 1274 1275 1276 1277 1278 1279 1280 1281 1282 1283 1284 1285 1286 1287 1288 1289 1290 1291 1292 1293 1294 1295 1296 1297 1298 1299 1300 1301 1302 1303 1304 1305 1306 1307 1308 1309 1310 1311 1312 1313 1314 1315 1316 1317 1318 1319 1320 1321 1322 1323 1324 1325 1326 1327 1328 1329 1330 1331 1332 1333 1334 1335 1336 1337 1338 1339 1340 1341 1342 1343 1344 1345 1346 1347 1348 1349 1350 1351 1352 1353 1354 1355 1356 1357 1358 1359 1360 1361 1362 1363 1364 1365 1366 1367 1368 1369 1370 1371 1372 1373 1374 1375 1376 1377 1378 1379 1380 1381 1382 1383 1384 1385 1386 1387 1388 1389 1390 1391 1392 1393 1394 1395 1396 1397 1398 1399 1400 1401 1402 1403 1404 1405 1406 1407 1408 1409 1410 1411 1412 1413 1414 1415 1416 1417 1418 1419 1420 1421 1422 1423 1424 1425 1426 1427 1428 1429 1430 1431 1432 1433 1434 1435 1436 1437 1438 1439 1440 1441 1442 1443 1444 1445 1446 1447 1448 1449 1450 1451 1452 1453 1454 1455 1456 1457 1458 1459 1460 1461 1462 1463 1464 1465 1466 1467 1468 1469 1470 1471 1472 1473 1474 1475 1476 1477 1478 1479 1480 1481 1482 1483 1484 1485 1486 1487 1488 1489 1490 1491 1492 1493 1494 1495 1496 1497 1498 1499 1500 1501 1502 1503 1504 1505 1506 1507 1508 1509 1510 1511 1512 1513 1514 1515 1516 1517 1518 1519 1520 1521 1522 1523 1524 1525 1526 1527 1528 1529 1530 1531 1532 1533 1534 1535 1536 1537 1538 
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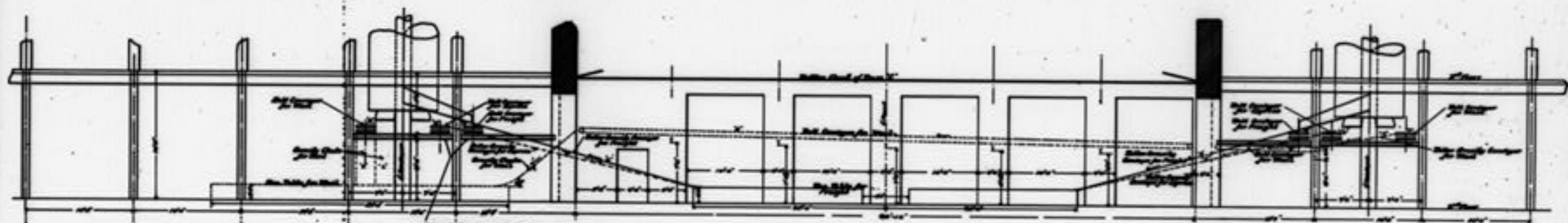
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN : WEST HALF  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



CATALOG ORDER BUILDING

	REVISION NO. DATE 1 10/1/24 2 10/1/24 3 10/1/24 4 10/1/24 5 10/1/24 6 10/1/24 7 10/1/24 8 10/1/24 9 10/1/24 10 10/1/24 11 10/1/24 12 10/1/24 13 10/1/24 14 10/1/24 15 10/1/24 16 10/1/24 17 10/1/24 18 10/1/24 19 10/1/24 20 10/1/24 21 10/1/24 22 10/1/24 23 10/1/24 24 10/1/24 25 10/1/24 26 10/1/24 27 10/1/24 28 10/1/24 29 10/1/24 30 10/1/24 31 10/1/24 32 10/1/24 33 10/1/24 34 10/1/24 35 10/1/24 36 10/1/24 37 10/1/24 38 10/1/24 39 10/1/24 40 10/1/24 41 10/1/24 42 10/1/24 43 10/1/24 44 10/1/24 45 10/1/24 46 10/1/24 47 10/1/24 48 10/1/24 49 10/1/24 50 10/1/24 51 10/1/24 52 10/1/24 53 10/1/24 54 10/1/24 55 10/1/24 56 10/1/24 57 10/1/24 58 10/1/24 59 10/1/24 60 10/1/24 61 10/1/24 62 10/1/24 63 10/1/24 64 10/1/24 65 10/1/24 66 10/1/24 67 10/1/24 68 10/1/24 69 10/1/24 70 10/1/24 71 10/1/24 72 10/1/24 73 10/1/24 74 10/1/24 75 10/1/24 76 10/1/24 77 10/1/24 78 10/1/24 79 10/1/24 80 10/1/24 81 10/1/24 82 10/1/24 83 10/1/24 84 10/1/24 85 10/1/24 86 10/1/24 87 10/1/24 88 10/1/24 89 10/1/24 90 10/1/24 91 10/1/24 92 10/1/24 93 10/1/24 94 10/1/24 95 10/1/24 96 10/1/24 97 10/1/24 98 10/1/24 99 10/1/24 100 10/1/24	SEARS ROEBUCK AND CO. 500 N. WABASH ST. CHICAGO, ILL. ARCHITECTS L. W. H.	10
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Section through Merchandise Bldg. Loading Dock  
Showing System of Conveyors in Shipping Dock

Section through Merchandise Bldg. Loading Dock  
Showing System of Conveyors in Shipping Dock

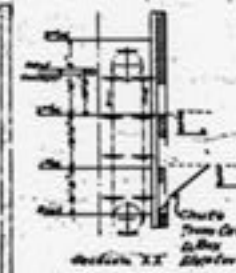
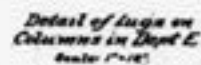
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Source: Hebebrand & Co.

Chicago, Illinois

April 19, 1914

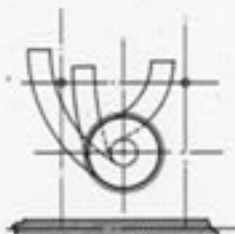
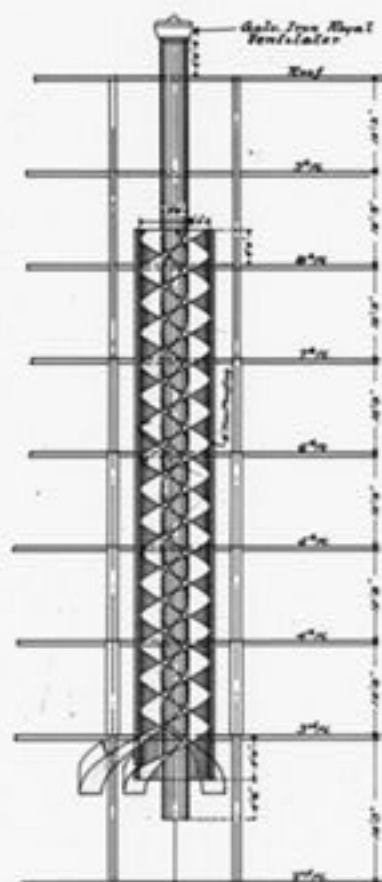
James E. Collins  
Architect  
Chicago



of Conveyors  
Wholesale Building  
& Co

Adams & Schenck  
Consulting Engineers  
Chicago - Baltimore

**Garrett 87-1985**  
 8-10-88



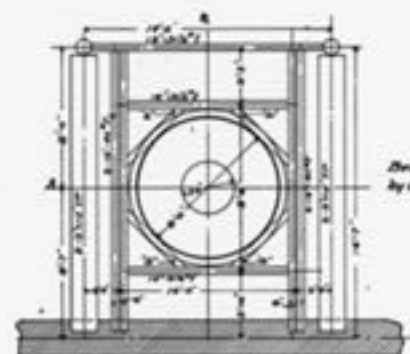
Plan & Elevation of Conveyor A-1  
Typical for Conveyors A-1 & A-2  
Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

Altimann & Williams  
Architects  
Chicago

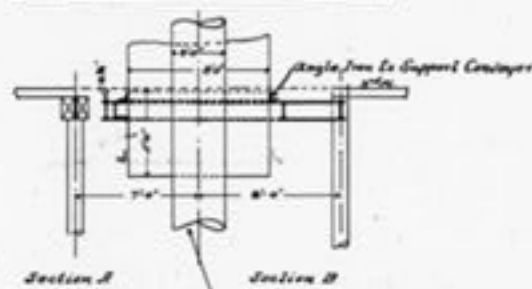
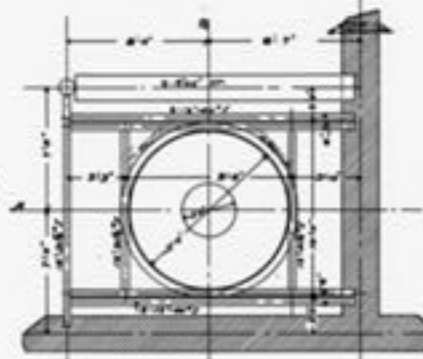
Note:  
Conveyors A-1 & A-2 to be Right Hand.  
Conveyors A-3 & A-4 to be Left Hand.  
Discharge Openings of all Conveyors  
Must Conform to Drawing A-1043  
6" Angle Irons to be Provided at Each  
Floor for Supporting Fire Proofing  
All Joints in Inner Core to be Tightly  
Calked and Entire Inner Core to be  
Painted with Special Paint.

Wearing Plates 1/4" High 1/4" Thick to be Provided  
for Each Spiral. Plates to be Bolted to Outer Shell.  
All Bolts to have Counter Sunk Heads on the Inside.

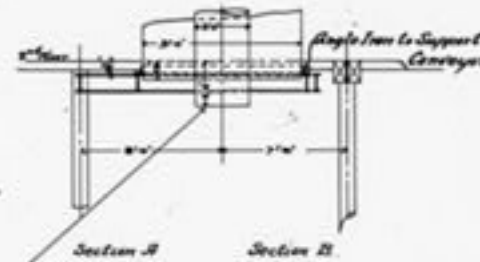
Openings to be Provided for Each Spiral of the Conveyor  
at All Floors.  
Doors for Openings to Conform in Every Particular  
to the Underwritten Specifications.  
All Openings in Conveyors to be Re-enforced with  
6x6 Angles Riveted to Outer Shell.  
Top of Conveyors to be Supplied with Removable  
Covers Having Suitable Inlets.  
Contractor to Furnish Details.



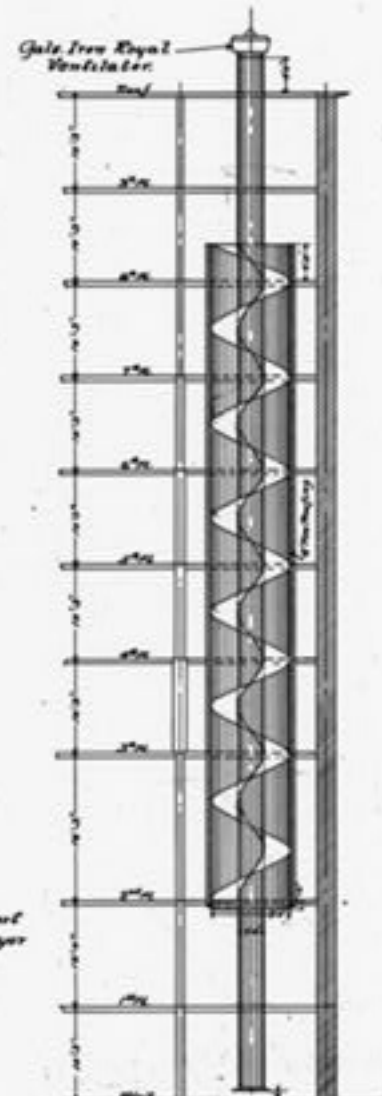
Beams to be furnished  
by conveyor contractor



Detail of Floor Framing Around Conveyors A-1 & A-2  
Showing Method of Supporting Conveyors  
Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"



Detail of Floor Framing Around Conveyors A-3  
Showing Method of Supporting Conveyors  
Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"



Elevation of Spiral Conveyor A-3  
Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

### Details of Spiral Conveyors in Merchandise Bldg

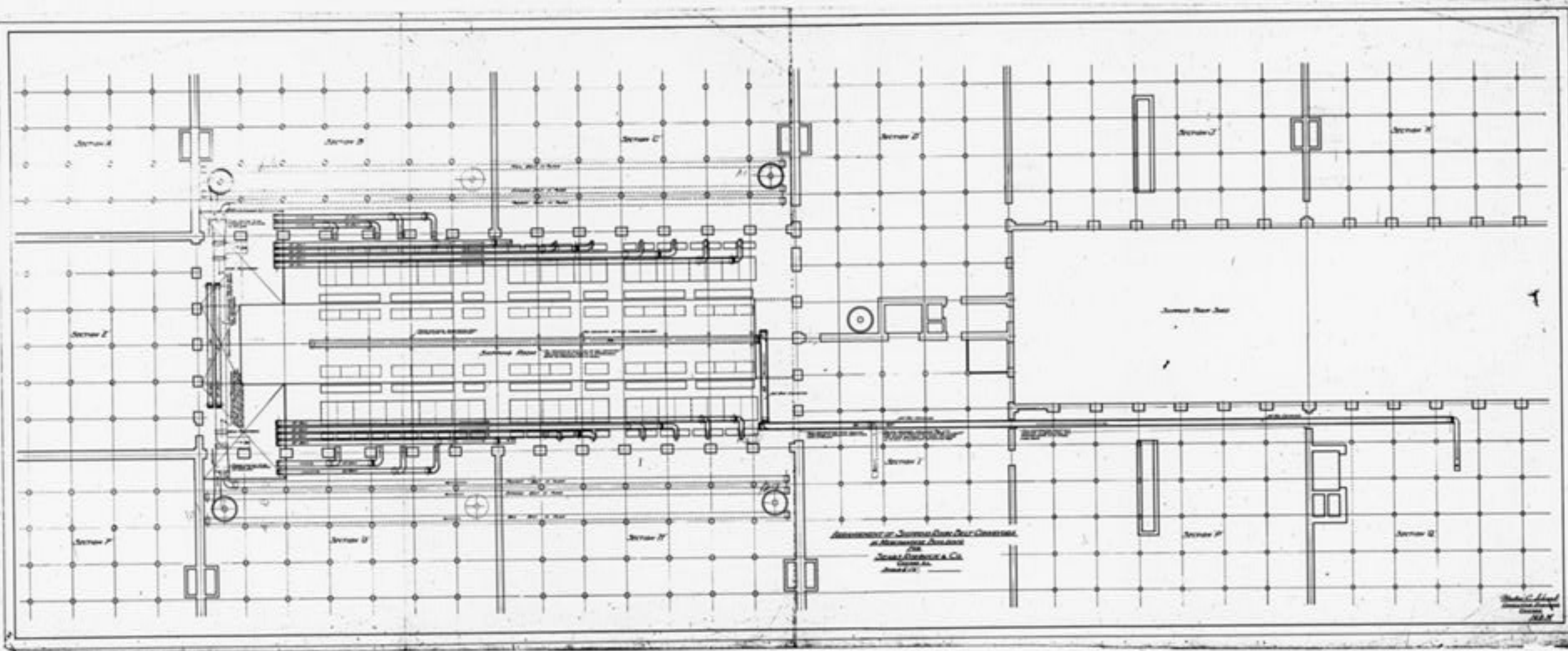
Sears-Roebuck & Co.

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"

Chicago

May 19 1906

Adams & Schmitt  
Consulting Engineers  
Chicago - Baltimore

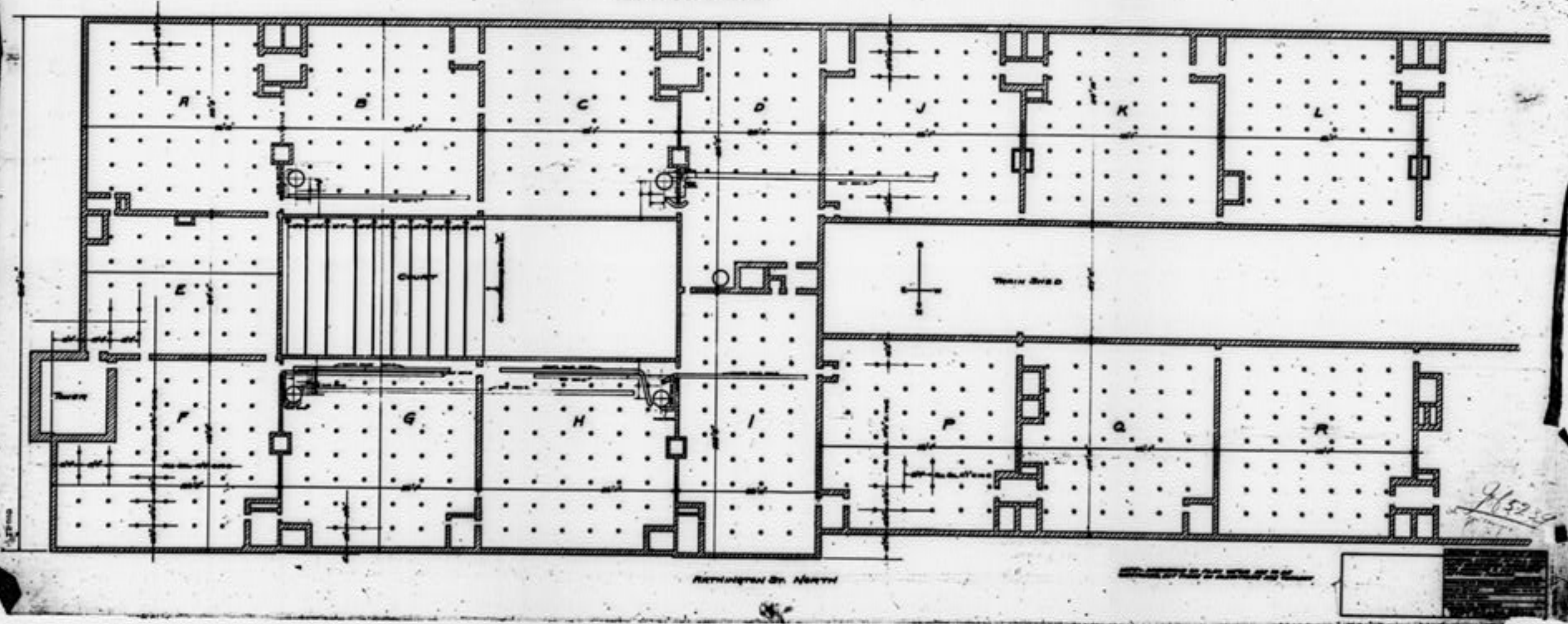
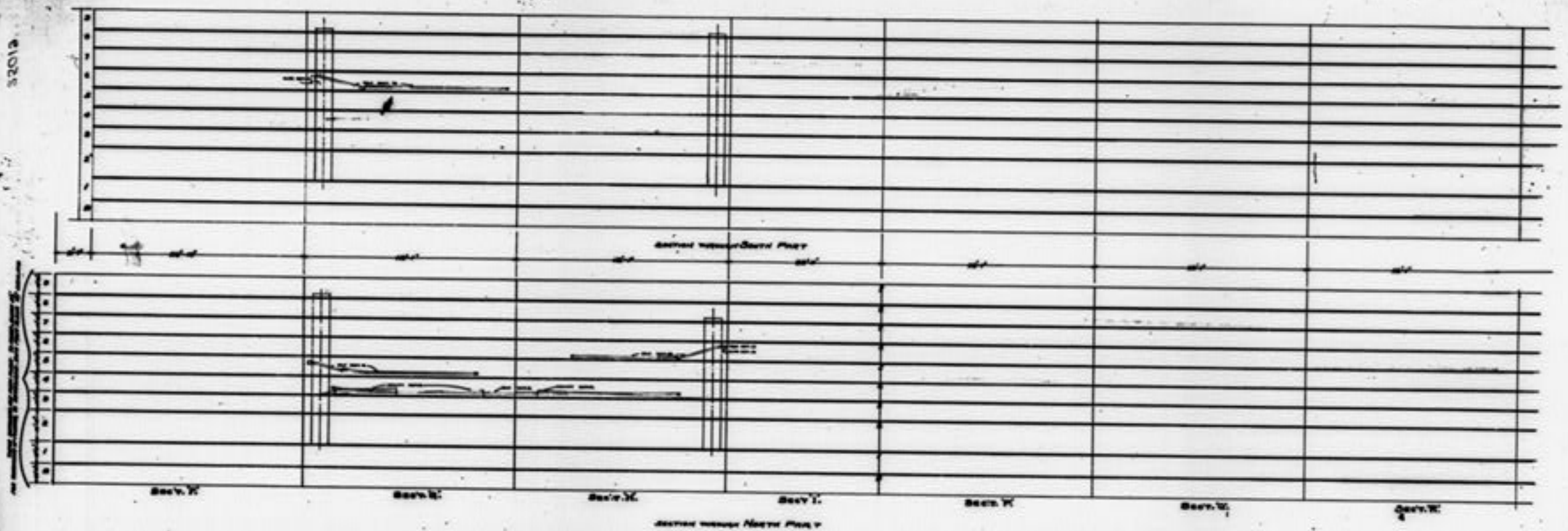


DESIGNED BY  
JAMES H. HARRIS  
ARCHT.  
JANUARY 1901

Wm. C. H. HARRIS  
ARCHT.  
JANUARY 1901



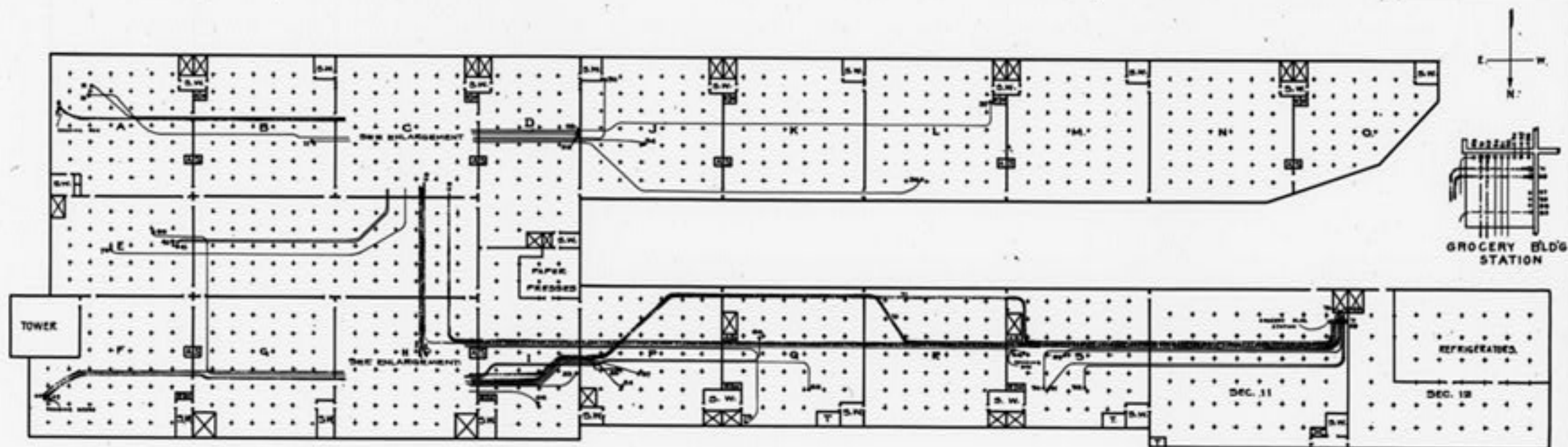
32012



RETHINGTON St. NORTH

RETHINGTON St. NORTH

465239



# BASEMENT.

OUTGOING AND TRUNK LINES ONLY.

LEGEND  
 OUTGOING TUBES ———  
 TRUNK LINES ———

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.  
 CHICAGO.

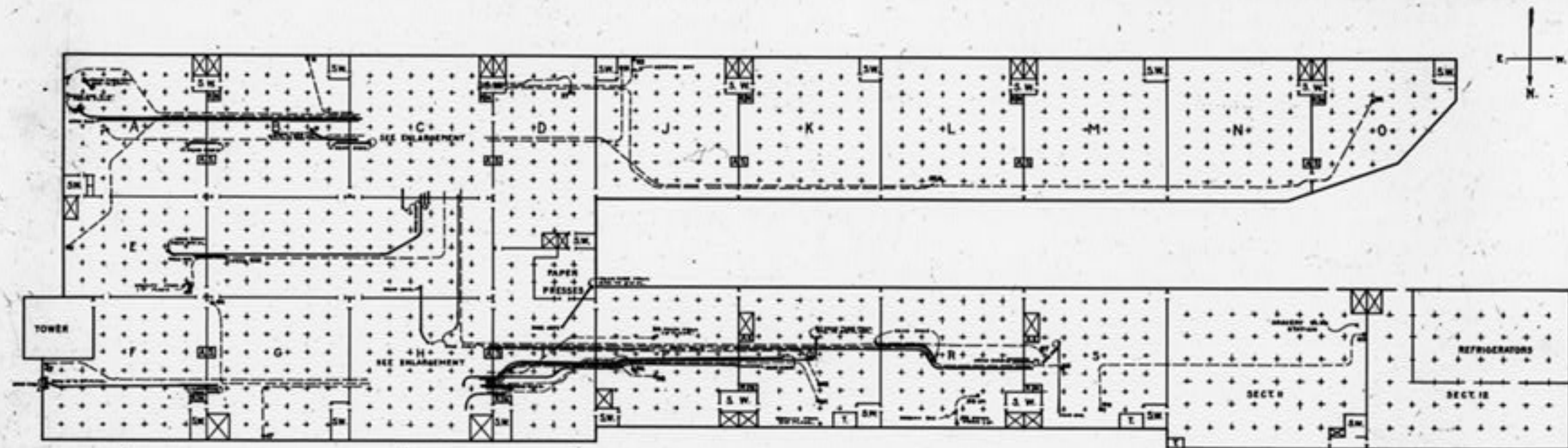
GENERAL LAYOUT OF  
 PNEUMATIC TUBES.

JOB. NIGHT-OUTGOING & TRUNK DEPT.

DRAWN BY: RM TRACED BY: JF CHECKED BY:

SCALE - 1" = 60'-0" ISSUE: 1-

DEPT. 224 No. 1



BASEMENT  
INCOMING AND DEAD TUBES ONLY.

LEGEND  
INCOMING TUBES ———  
DEAD TUBES ———

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.  
CHICAGO.

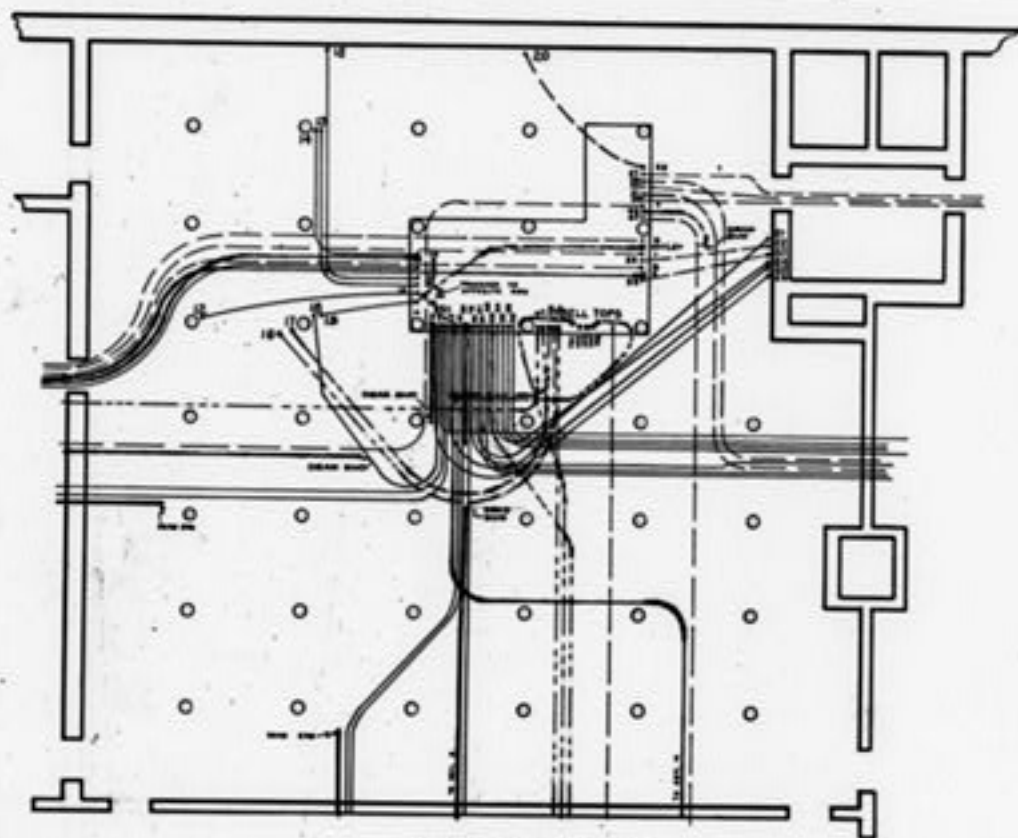
GENERAL LAYOUT OF  
PNEUMATIC TUBES  
BASMT. - INCOMING & DEAD

DRAWN BY: TRACED BY: A2 CHECKED BY:

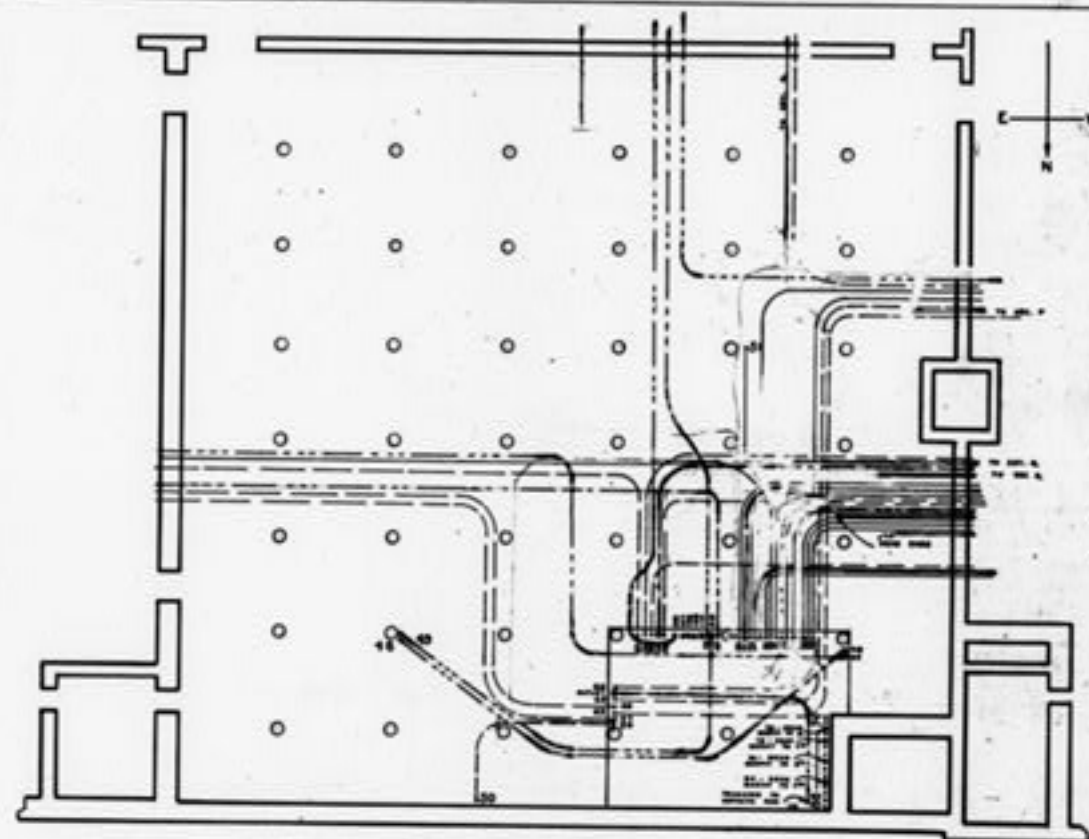
SCALE: 1" = 60'-0" ISSUE: 1-

DEPT. 224 No. 2





BASEMENT SECTION C



BASEMENT SECTION H

SEARS ROEBUCK & CO  
CHICAGO

GENERAL LAYOUT OF  
PNEUMATIC TUBES

JOB. BATHS-SEC. C & SEC. H. DEPT.

DRAWN BY: TRACED BY: CHECKED BY:

SCALE: 1" = 16'-0"

ISSUE NO.

DEPT. 224

No 3

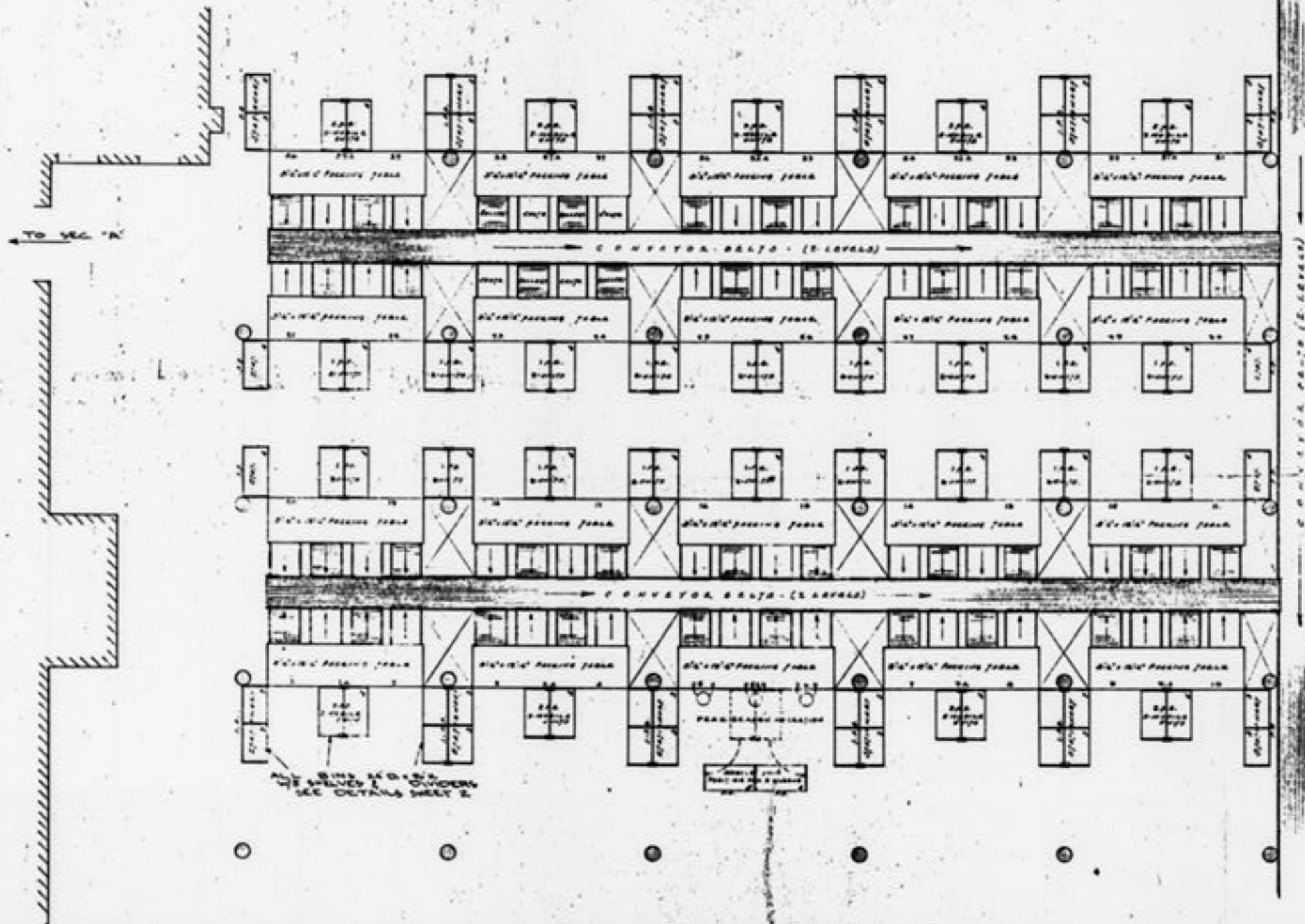




## Section B



SEARS, ROEBUCK & Co.  
ST. LOUIS, MO.  
REARRANGEMENT OF  
RECEIVING RACKS, CONVEYORS, ETC.  
JAN. 9, 1957  
SCALE 1" = 6' OCT. 1, 1957  
APPROVED BY J. A. J.



SHEET 1 OF 2

LEGEND

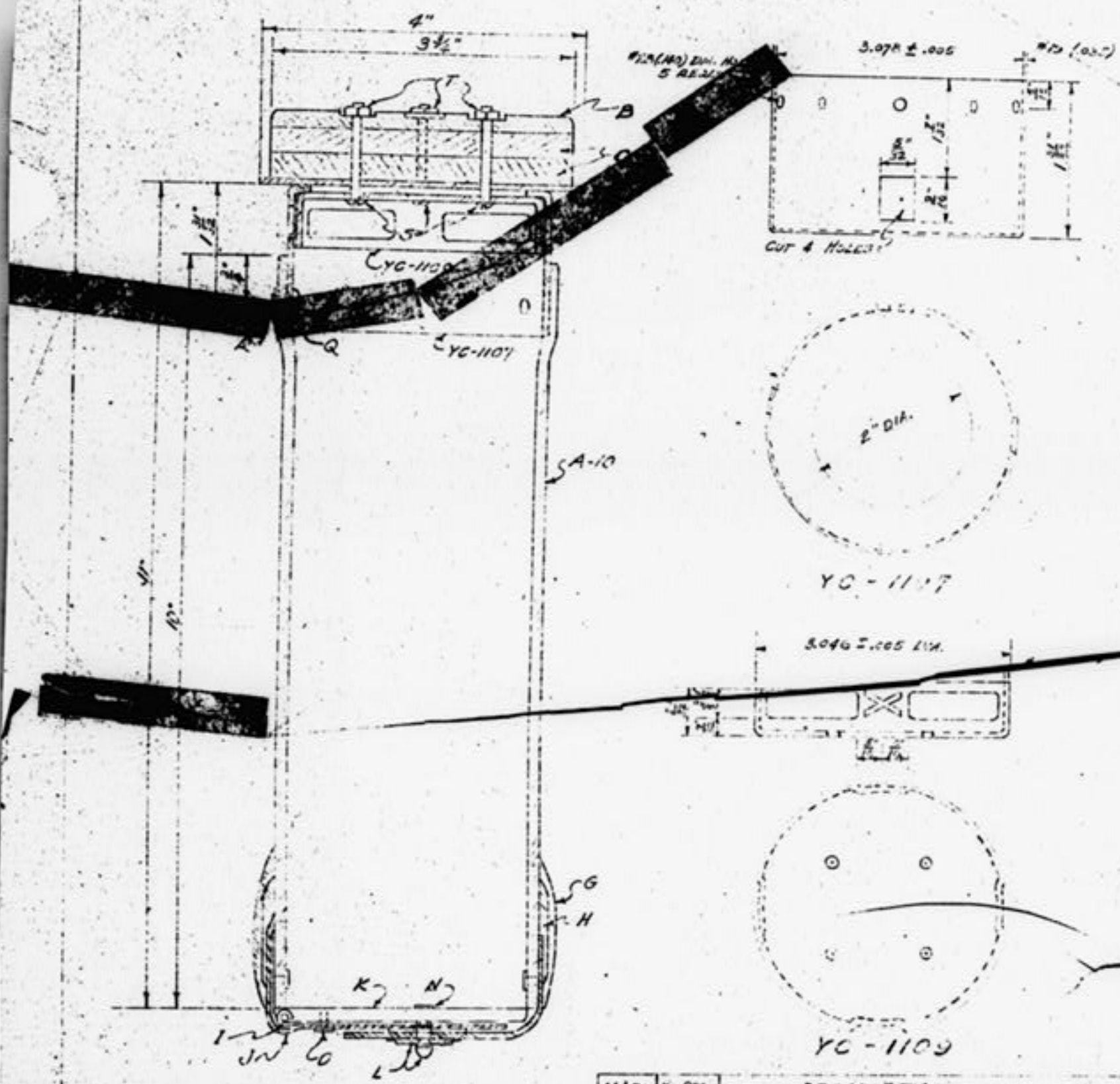
- CF - INDICATES - CENTER FILLED PANEL, UPWARDS.
- FE - INDICATES - FLUSH PANEL, END UPWARDS.
- FB - INDICATES - PANEL, BACK OR DIVIDER PANEL.
- SD - INDICATES - STEEL, SAND CROSS BRACING.
- CL - INDICATES - LOCATION OF UPRIGHT CLAMPS (CL)



SWAIN & MYERS  
 DECATUR, ILLINOIS  
 NO. 308 PH. 423-3401

FOR SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.				
2ND FLOOR SECTION - W				
CHICAGO - ILLINOIS				
DATE	SCALE	DES. BY	CHK. BY	APPROVED BY
6/24/63	1/4" = 1'-0"	A. C. S.	G. F.	30623

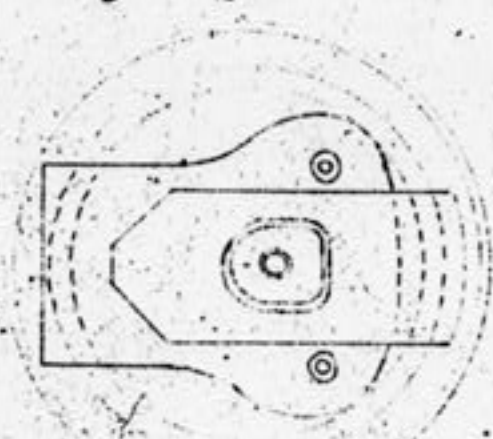
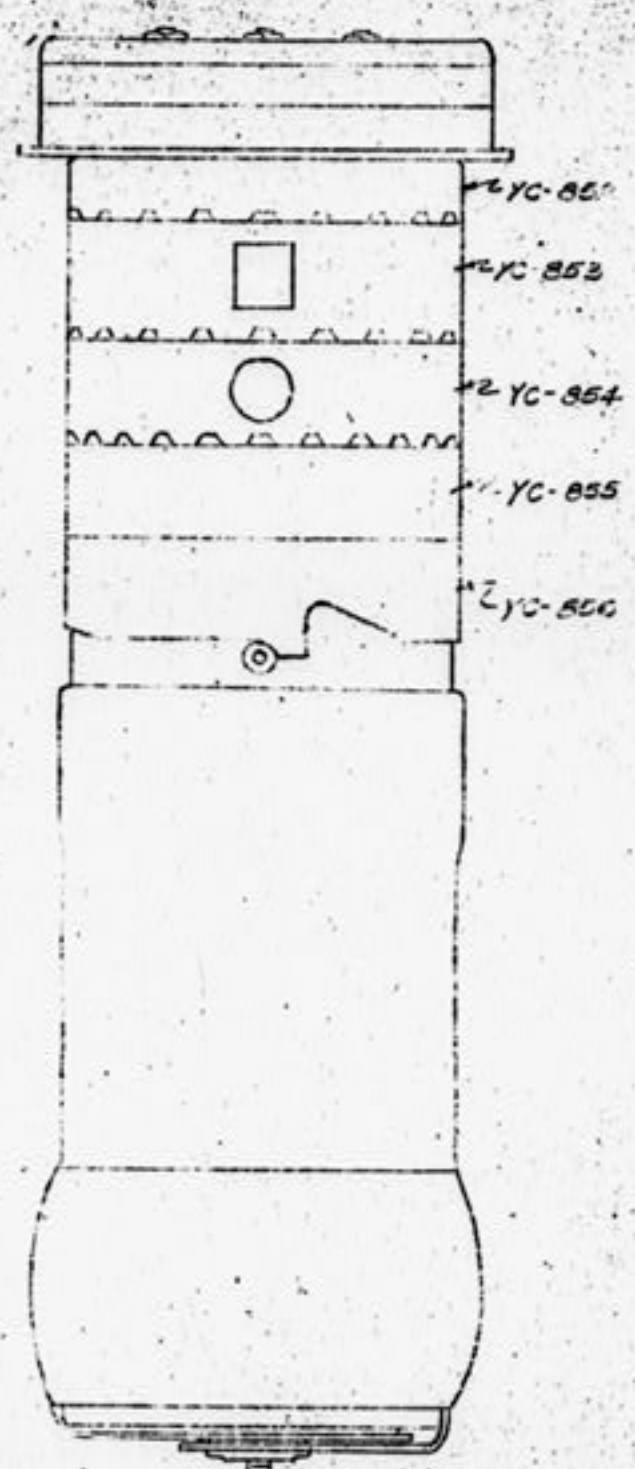
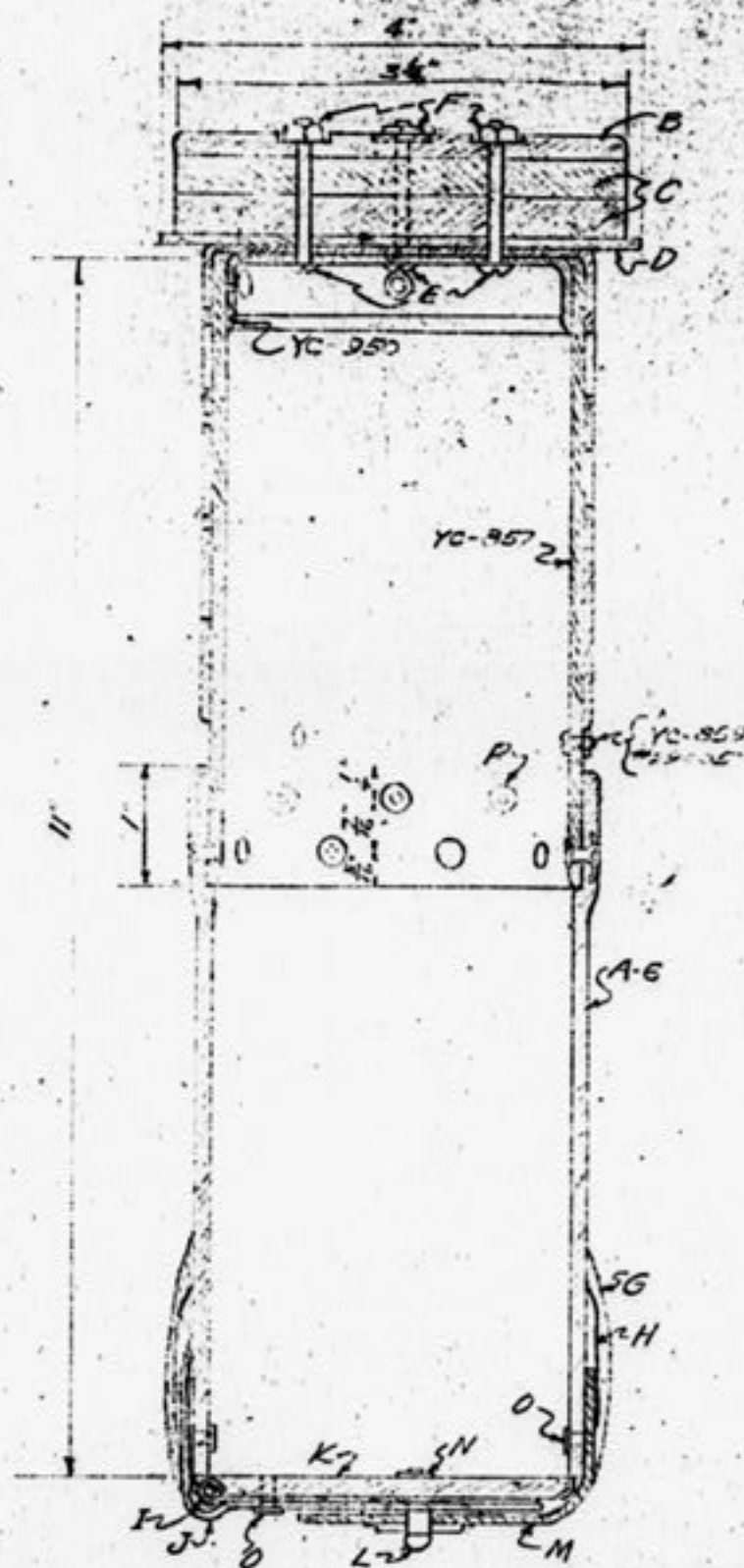




4" PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM  
11" LEATHER CARRIER

MAE	NO	DESCRIPTION
A	1	10" LEATHER SKIN
B	1	3 1/2" DIA. X 1/2" FELT DISC FOR LID - PUNCHED 4 HOLES
C	2	3 1/2" DIA. X 1/2" FELT DISC FOR LID - PUNCHED 4 HOLES
D	1	4" DIA. X 1/2" VIM. LEATHER - NARROW FOR HEAD PUNCHED 4 HOLES
YC-1107	1	OUTSIDE STEEL CUP
YC-1108	1	INSIDE BRASS CUP
G	1	STRAIGHT VIM LEATHER SKIRT 2" X 1 1/2" OF CURVED LEATHER SKIRT OLD STYLE
H	1	LADDIN 5/16" X 1/2" FOR NEW STYLE STRAIGHT SKIRT
I	1	STEEL HINGE
J	1	LEATHER HINGE
K	1	HINGE DISC MADE FROM OLD LEATHER DISC FORMERLY USED ON FELT HEAD - ITEM #4
L	1	LIFT THE DOT PROBABLY 3 POKES
M	2	BEEL NUTS FOR ICE WITH ABOVE
N	2	SLOTTED COPPER RIVETS STYLE #131 - 3/16" X 1/2" HINGE PLATING
O	5	SOLID COPPER RIVETS #9 - 1/4" DIA. HEAD TO PUNCH LEATHER BODY TO STEEL CUP
P	1	COPPER BUSH FOR #9 RIVETS
Q	1	MACHINE SCREW'S ROUND HEAD #2-8-32
R	1	NEXCON NUTS FOR SAME #2-8-32 TO FASTEN FELT HEAD LEATHER TOP PIECE TO CARRIER
S	1	STEEL PLATE 7" X 11" USED ON SOLID FELT CARRIER HEADS 1 1/2" DIA. PUNCHED 4 HOLES



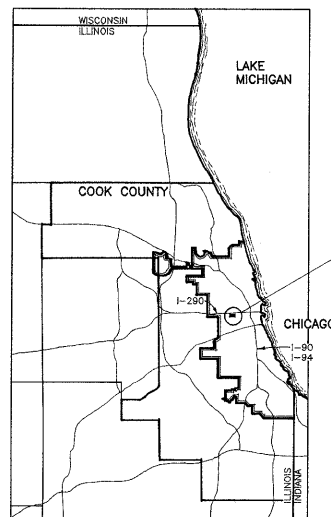


4 PNEUMATIC TUBE SYSTEM  
11" CALIBER - TRIPLE INDICATING

MARK	NO.	DESCRIPTION
A-B	1	6" LEATHER
C	1	3 1/2" DIA X 1/4" THICK LEATHER DISC FOR TOP OF FELT
D	1	3 1/2" DIA X 1/4" FELT DISC FOR HEADS FINISHED & HOLED
E	1	4" DIA X 1/4" VIN. LEATHER WASHERS
F	1	OR 3/4" WASHERS OF ORAL SACKET LEATHER OR CHROME
YC-851	1	MACHINE SCREWS AROUND HEAD #2-B-32
YC-852	1	HEXAGON NUTS #2-B-32 TO FASTEN FELT HEAD AND
YC-853	1	LEATHER TO TOP OF DISC TO CAPTURE
YC-854	1	OUTSIDE CUP FOR FIBER SHELL
YC-855	1	INSIDE CUP FOR FIBER SHELL
YC-856	1	ENGRAVED FIBER SHELLS WITH 1/4" DIA
YC-857	1	FIRST COLOR BAND WITH 4 RECTANGULAR HOLES
YC-858	1	FIRST NUMBER BAND WITH 1 ROUND HOLE
YC-859	1	SECOND NUMBER BAND WITH 1 ROUND HOLE
YC-860	1	LOCKING BAND
YC-861	1	NOVELL PISTON DIRECTORIAL
YC-862	1	SHOULDER STEEL
G	1	SHOULDER STEEL
H	1	SHOULDER STEEL
I	1	SHOULDER STEEL
J	1	SHOULDER STEEL
K	1	SHOULDER STEEL
L	1	SHOULDER STEEL
M	1	SHOULDER STEEL
N	1	SHOULDER STEEL
O	1	SHOULDER STEEL
P	1	SHOULDER STEEL

# SEARS ROEBUCK AND CO.

TITLE ADAPTED FROM LETTERING IN TERRA COTTA ON THE MERCHANDISE BUILDING TOWER, FOURTEENTH FLOOR, ALL ELEVATIONS (NOT TO SCALE)

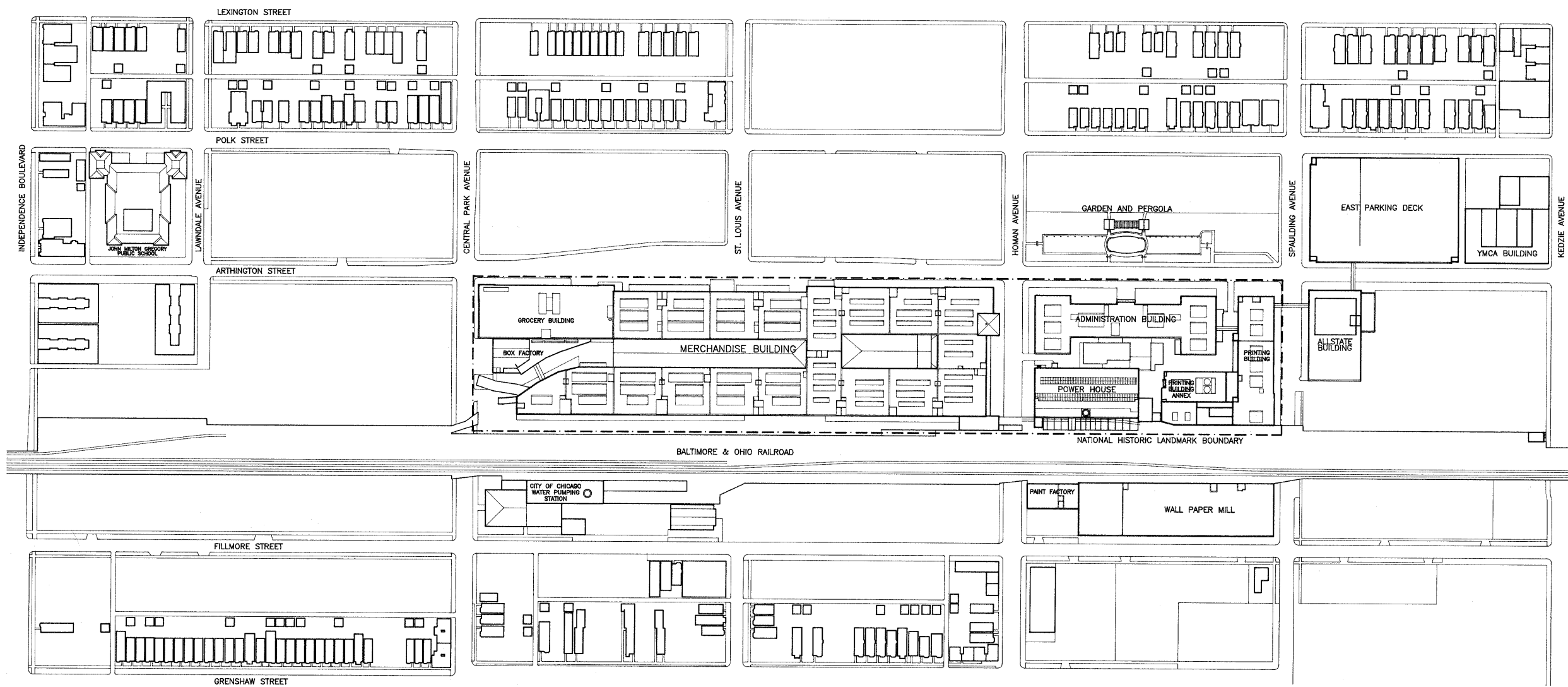
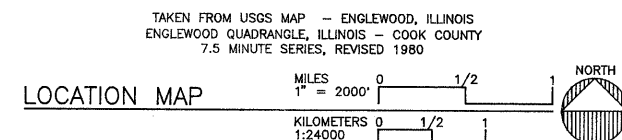
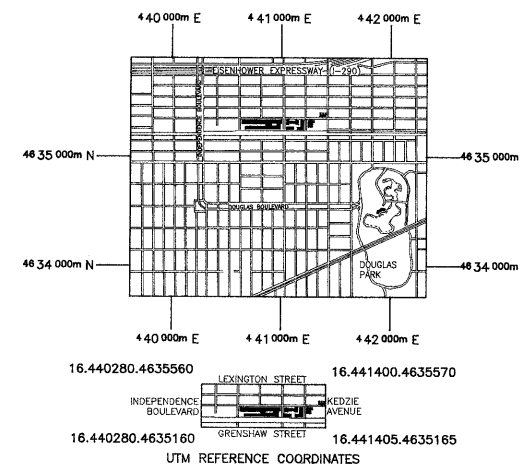


REGION MAP  
NOT TO SCALE

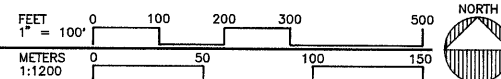
THE SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT IN CHICAGO WAS THE PRIMARY FACILITY OF THE NATION'S LARGEST MAIL ORDER AND MERCHANDISE CONCERN. THE MAIL ORDER PLANT WAS ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED IN 1905-1906, AND CONSISTED OF THE MERCHANDISE BUILDING, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, PRINTING AND ADVERTISING BUILDING, POWER HOUSE, YMCA BUILDING, AND PAINT FACTORY. THESE BUILDINGS ARE ALL EXTANT ON THE SITE TODAY, TOGETHER WITH THE WALL PAPER MILL (1912) AND THE ALLSTATE BUILDING (1949). THE ORIGINAL BUILDINGS OF THE MAIL ORDER PLANT WERE DESIGNED BY THE NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FIRM OF NIMMONS AND FELLOWS. SUCCESSOR FIRMS TO NIMMONS AND FELLOWS, INCLUDING GEORGE C. NIMMONS & CO., NIMMONS & CO., AND NIMMONS, CARR & WRIGHT, DESIGNED LATER STRUCTURES AT THE SITE.

THE SEARS CATALOGUE OFFERED EVERYTHING NEEDED FOR HOUSE, FARM, AND FAMILY TO RURAL AMERICANS IN THE EARLY PART OF THIS CENTURY. FROM THE MAIL ORDER PLANT IN CHICAGO, MILLIONS OF ORDERS WERE SENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY RAIL AND BY TRUCK, OVER A PERIOD OF MORE THAN 80 YEARS. AFTER DECADES OF SUCCESSFUL GROWTH, RETAIL SALES GRADUALLY REPLACED CATALOGUE ORDERS AS THE MAJOR PORTION OF SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY'S BUSINESS. THE CHICAGO PLANT CEASED MAIL ORDER OPERATIONS IN 1987.

THE SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT AND MERCHANDISE BUILDING DOCUMENTATION PROJECT WAS COMPLETED BY WISS, JANNEY, ELSTNER ASSOCIATES, INC. OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, AND SPONSORED BY THE SHAW COMPANY AND SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY. THE PROJECT TEAM INCLUDED HARRY J. HUNDERMAN, PROJECT MANAGER AND HISTORICAL ARCHITECT; DEBORAH SLATON, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN; JEFFREY KOERBER, KIRSTEN A. KINGSLEY, YORK M. CHAN, AND EDWARD A. GERNS, ARCHITECTS AND DELINEATORS; MICHAEL FUS, DELINEATOR; AND LESLIE SCHWARTZ, PHOTOGRAPHER.

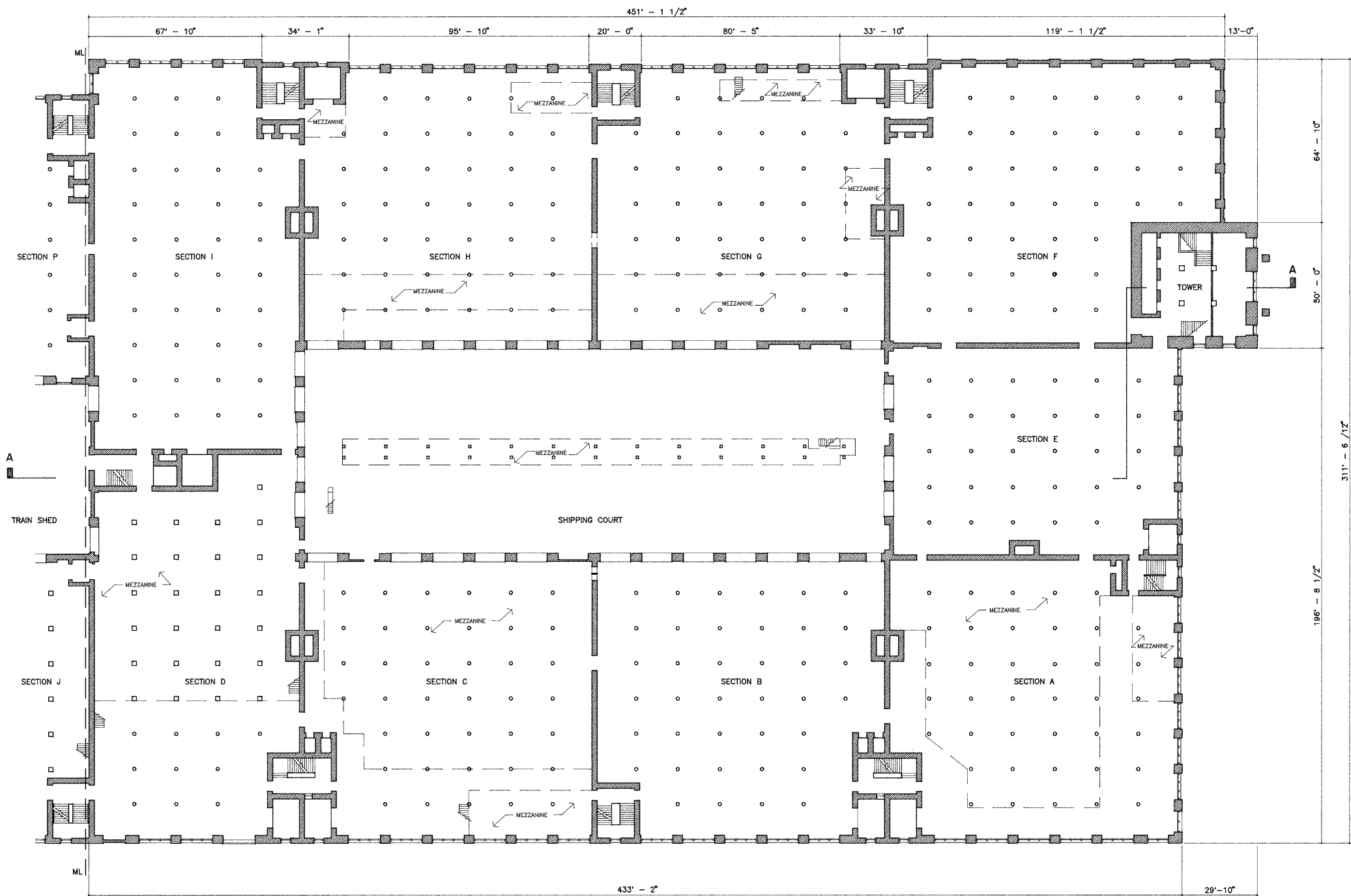


SITE PLAN

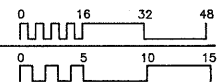


NOTE:  
SITE PLAN BASED ON FIELD MEASUREMENTS AND CITY OF CHICAGO AERIAL SURVEY, SE SECTION 14, TOWNSHIP 39, N., RANGE 13, E.; SW SECTION 14, TOWNSHIP 39, N., RANGE 13, E.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN — EAST



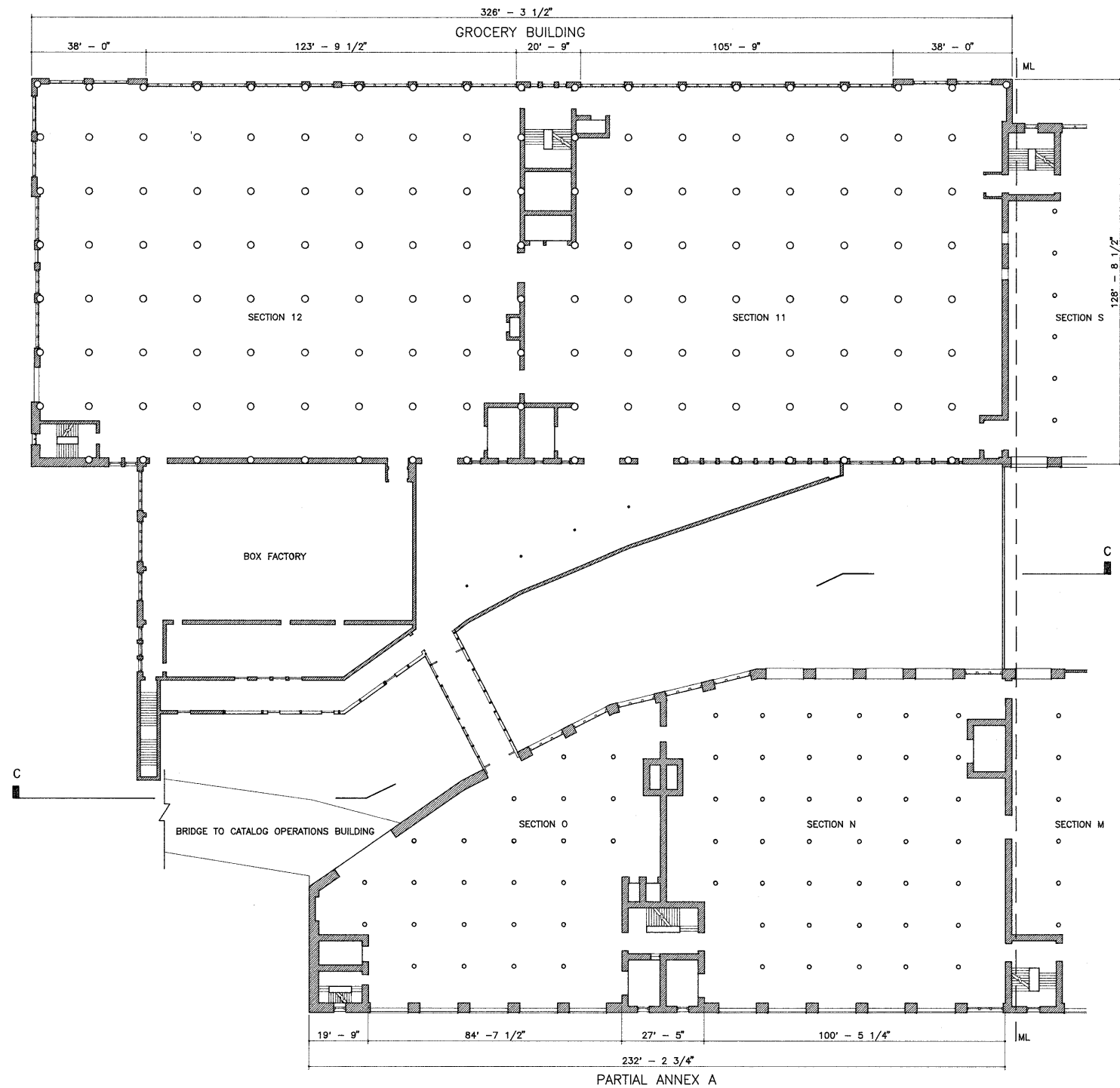
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METERS 1:192





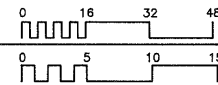


SECOND FLOOR PLAN — WEST



FEET 1/16" = 1'-0"

METERS 1:192



DRAWN BY: KRISTEN A. KINGSLEY

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE / DENVER

UNITED STATES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

924 SOUTH HOMAN AVENUE

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT, MERCHANDISE BUILDING

CHICAGO

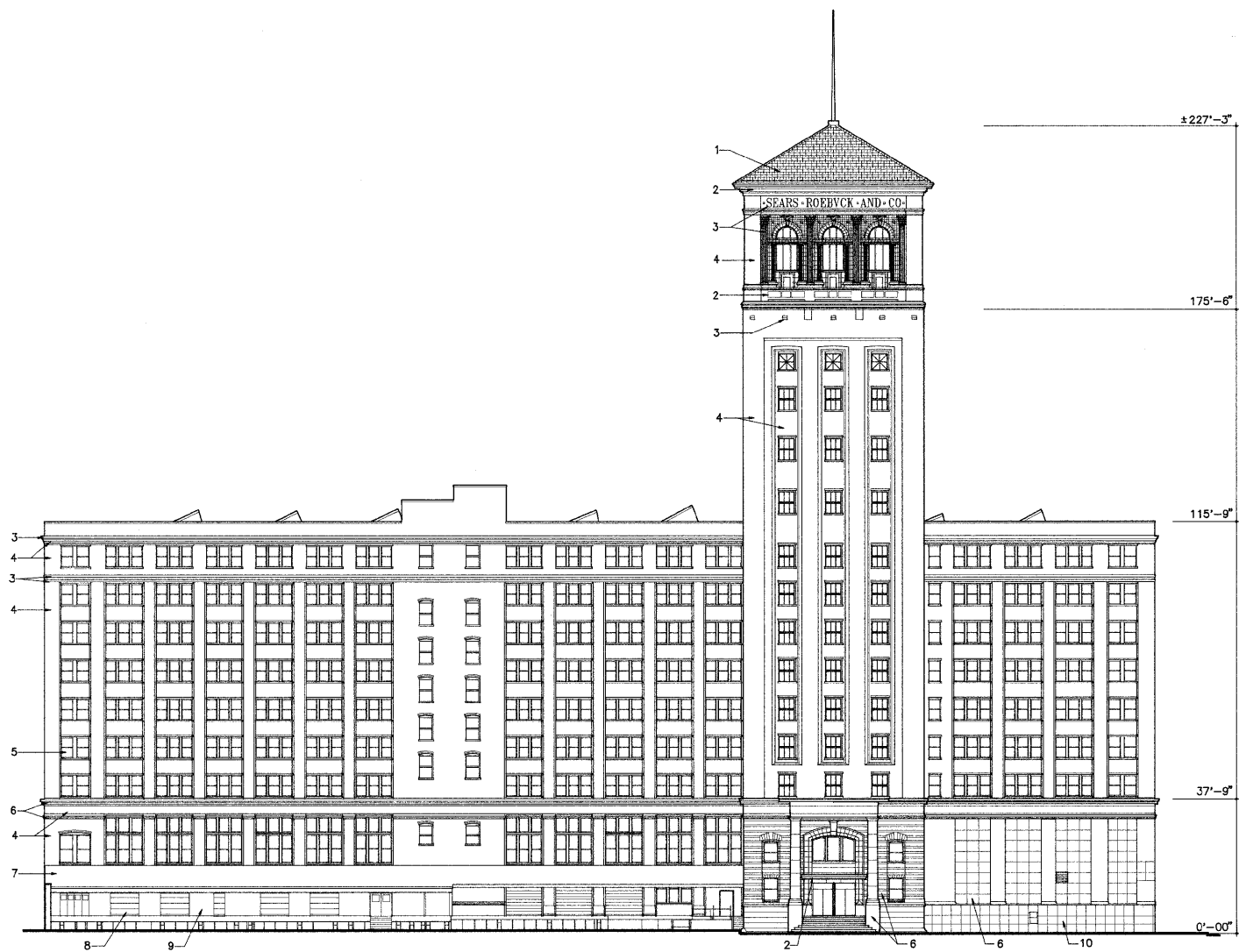
ILLINOIS

SHEET 3 OF 3

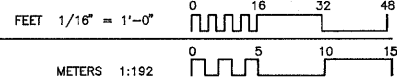
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

IL-187-A

IF REPRODUCED, PLEASE CREDIT: HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NAME OF DELINEATOR, DATE OF THE DRAWING



EAST ELEVATION

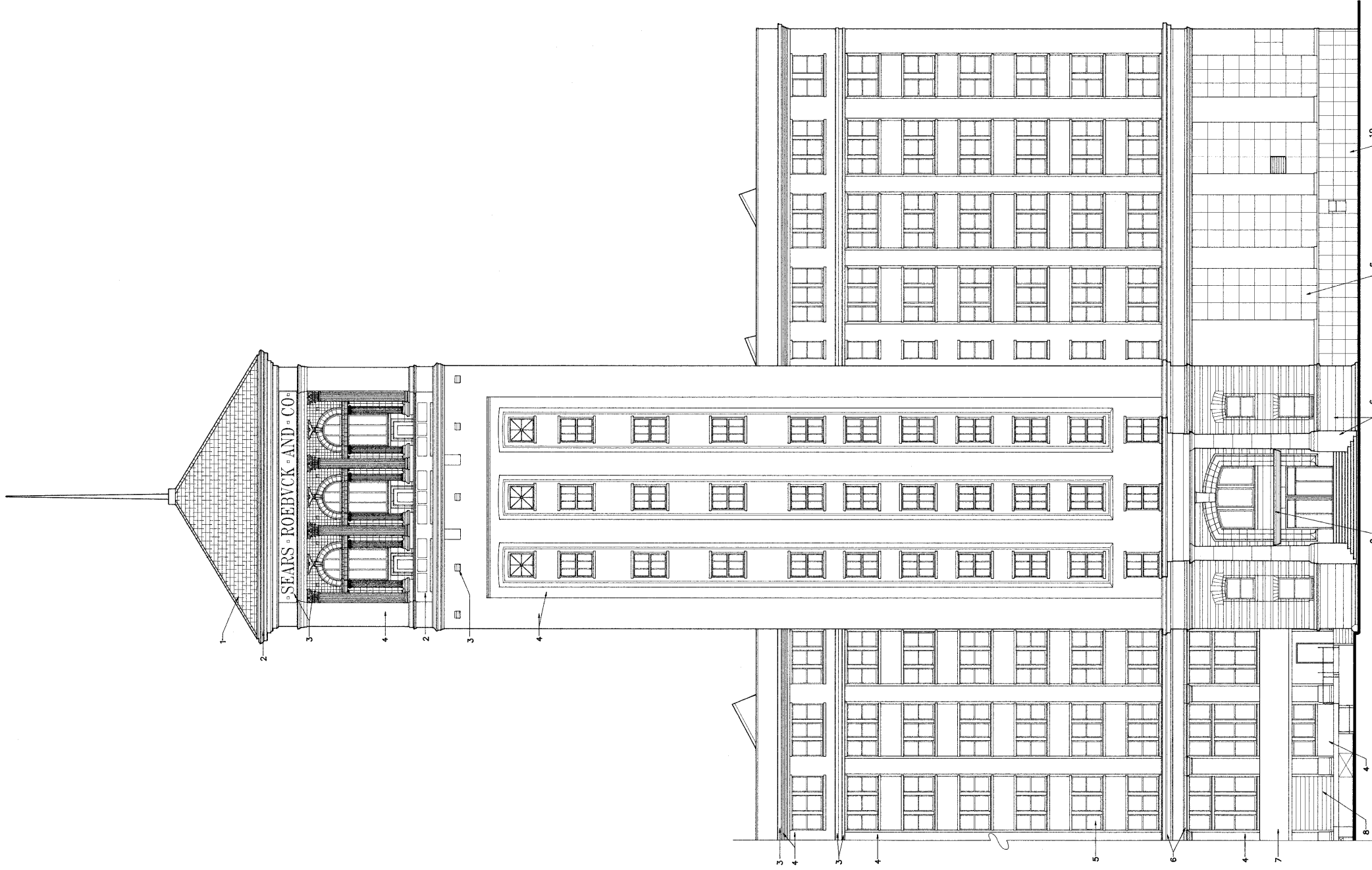


MATERIALS LIST

1. CLAY TILE
2. SHEET METAL
3. TERRA COTTA
4. BRICK
5. WOOD FRAME WINDOWS
6. LIMESTONE
7. ASPHALT SHINGLES
8. ROLLING METAL SHUTTERS
9. WOOD SIDING
10. GRANITE

12/20/02

- MATERIALS LIST
1. CLAY TILE
  2. SHEET METAL
  3. TERRA COTTA
  4. BRICK
  5. WOOD FRAME WINDOWS
  6. LIMESTONE
  7. ASPHALT SHINGLES
  8. ROLLING METAL SHUTTERS
  9. WOOD SIDING
  10. GRANITE



PARTIAL EAST ELEVATION

FEET 1/8" = 1'-0" 0 1 2 3 4 5 8 10 16

METERS 1:96 0 1 2 3 4 5 10

JOHN E. KRISTEN A. KINGSLEY  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE / DENVER  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

924 SOUTH HOMAN AVENUE

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE  
SEARS, ROEBUCK AND COMPANY MAIL ORDER PLANT, MERCHANDISE BUILDING  
CHICAGO  
COOK COUNTY

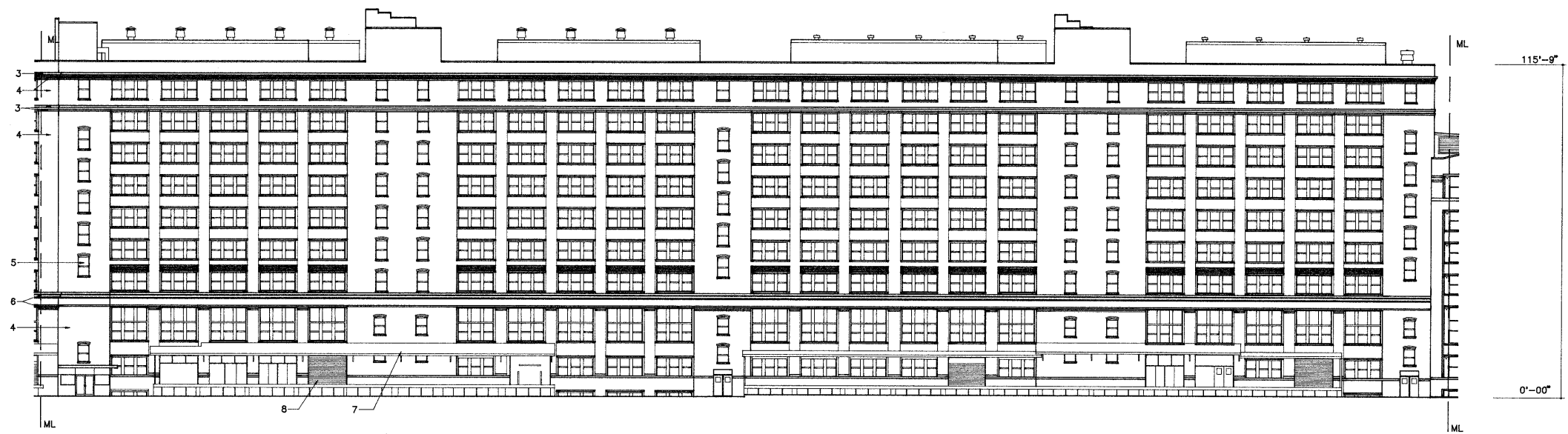
SHEET 5 OF 11  
ILLINOIS

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
BUILDINGS SURVEY  
IL-187-A

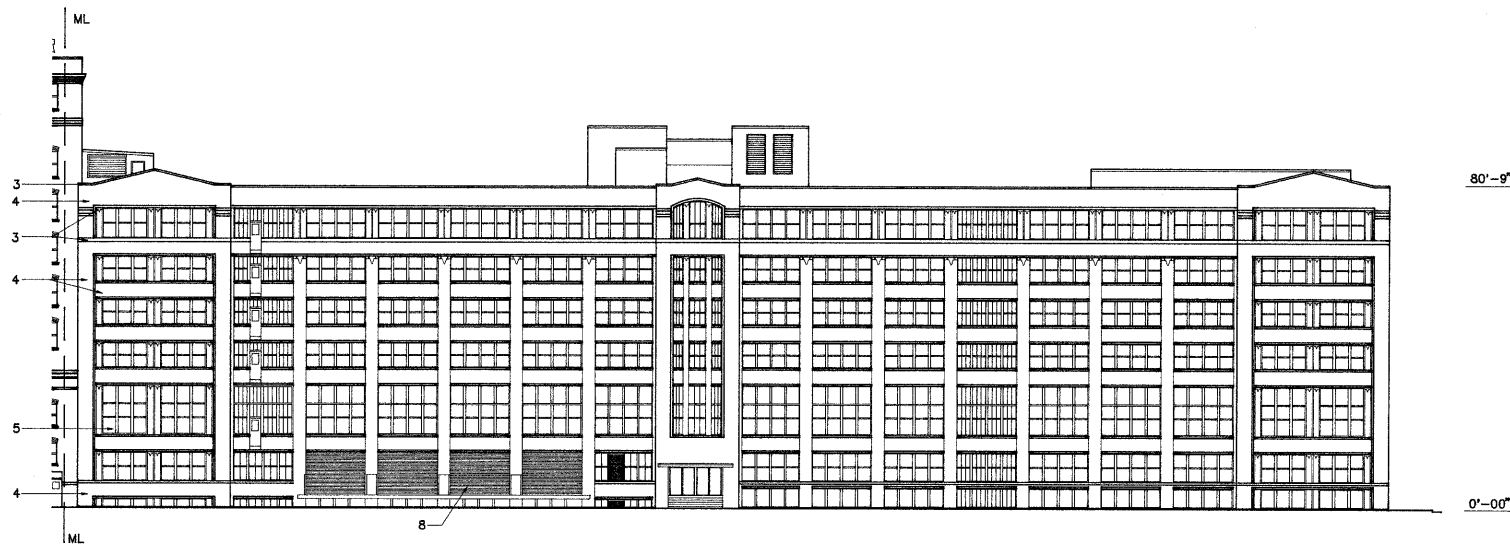
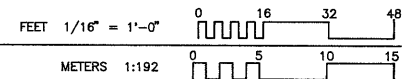
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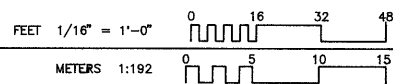




NORTH ELEVATION — CENTER

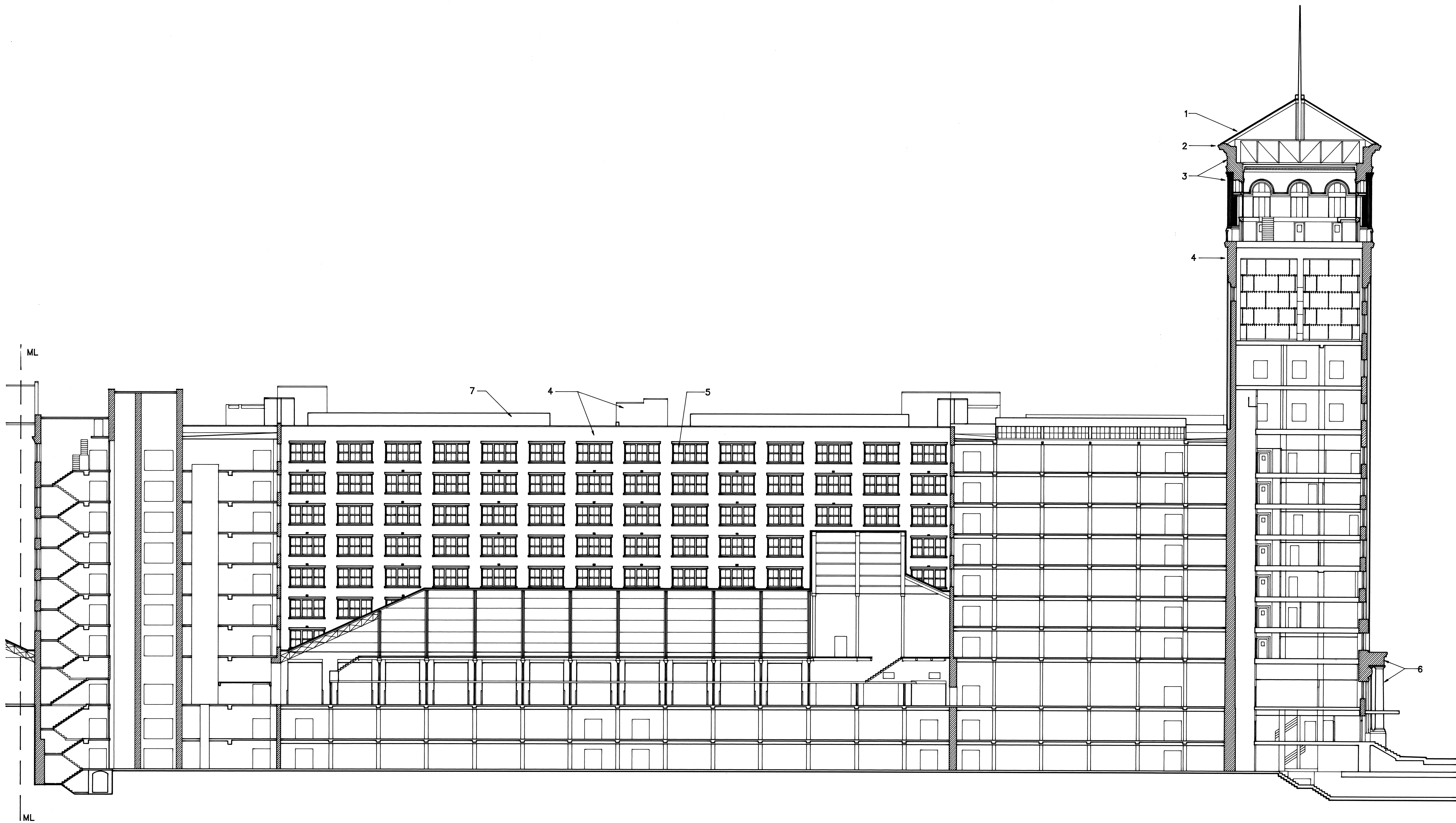


NORTH ELEVATION — WEST



#### MATERIALS LIST

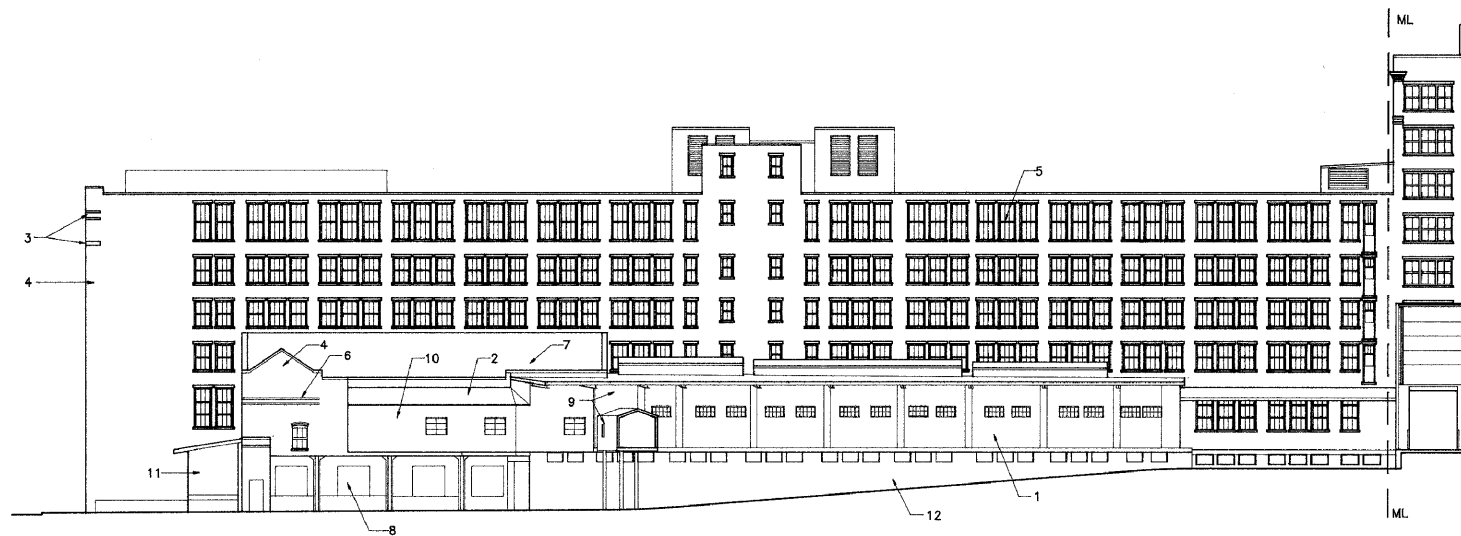
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2. SHEET METAL
3. TERRA COTTA
4. BRICK
5. WOOD FRAME WINDOWS
6. LIMESTONE
7. ASPHALT SHINGLES
8. ROLLING METAL SHUTTERS
9. WOOD SIDING
10. GRANITE



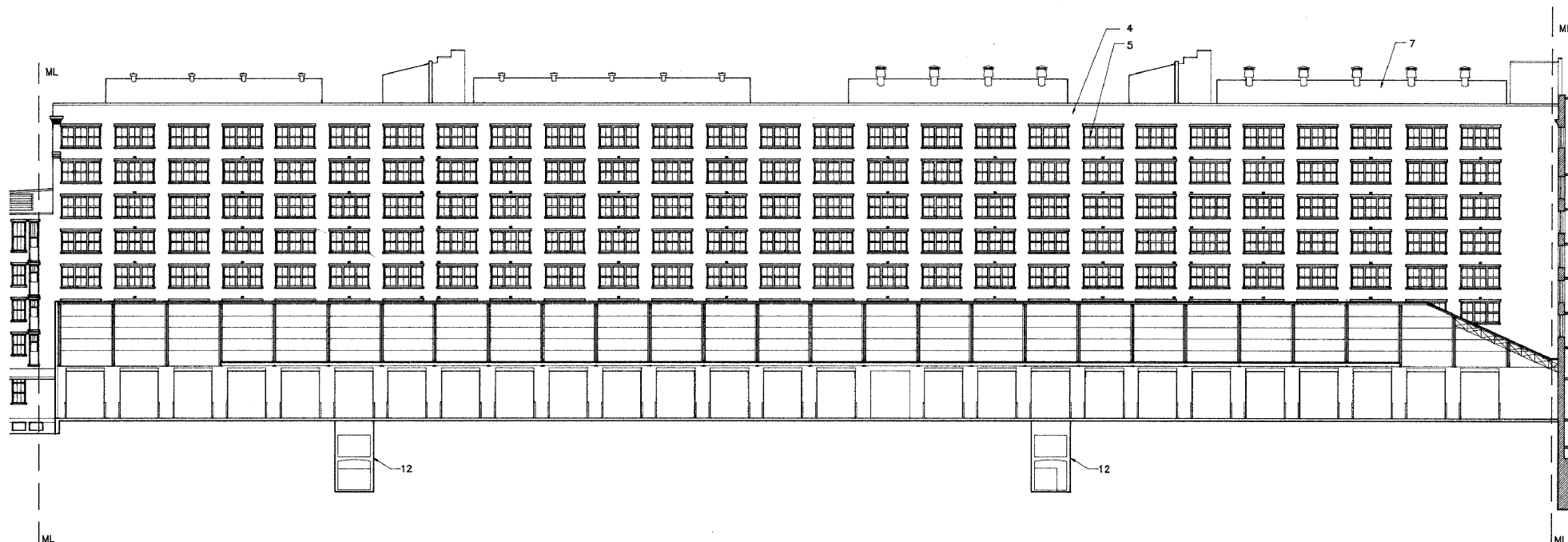
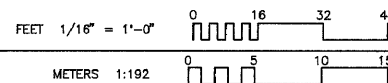
- MATERIALS LIST
1. CLAY TILE
  2. SHEET METAL
  3. TERRA COTTA
  4. BRICK
  5. METAL FRAME WINDOWS
  6. LIMESTONE
  7. CONCRETE ROOFING PANELS

LONGITUDINAL SECTION A-A (LOOKING NORTH) - EAST

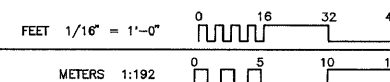
FEET 1/16" = 1'-0" 0 16 32 48  
METERS 1:192 0 5 10 15



LONGITUDINAL SECTION C-C (LOOKING NORTH) - WEST



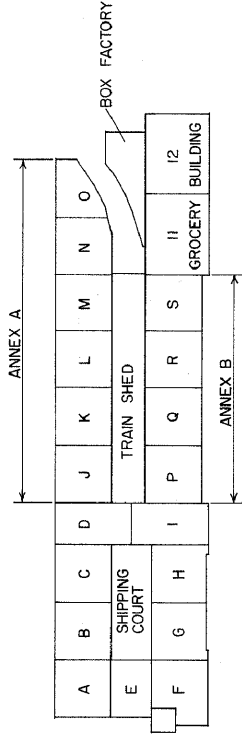
LONGITUDINAL SECTION B-B (LOOKING NORTH) - CENTER



# MATERIALS LIST

1. CLAY TILE
2. SHEET METAL
3. TERRA COTTA
4. BRICK
5. METAL FRAME WINDOWS
6. LIMESTONE
7. CONCRETE ROOFING PANELS
8. ROLLING METAL SHUTTERS
9. WOOD SIDING
10. FIBERGLASS SIDING
11. METAL SIDING
12. CONCRETE





# Chronology of Building Construction

- 1905 Merchandise Building - basement to ninth floor, Sections A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I
- Merchandise Building Annex A - basement to third floor Sections J, K, L, M, N, O
- Merchandise Building Annex B - basement to third floor Sections P, Q, R, S
- 1910 Addition to Annex A - fourth to ninth floors, Sections J, K
- Addition to Annex B - fourth to ninth floors, Sections P, Q
- 1912 Grocery Building - basement to sixth floor Sections 11 and 12
- Box Factory - partial basement, first and second floors
- 1913-1916 construction Addition to Annex B - fourth to ninth floors, Sections R, S
- 1917 construction Addition to Annex A, fourth to ninth floor Sections L, M, N, O

## Receiving and Shipping of Goods in the Merchandise Building

Receiving and shipping of goods was primarily by railroad until the 1930s, when rail was replaced by truck for incoming and outgoing goods. The building was designed in 1905 to receive goods by rail and to ship them by rail or by truck. Goods were received on the first floor and on a raised trestle for the second floor. Goods were sorted on the first floor according to merchandise type. Goods on the second floor were slid on ramps down to the first floor, where they were moved horizontally to the different sections of the warehouse. This prevented the incoming flow on goods on the first floor from conflicting with the outgoing flow. Goods were then transported by truck transport, goods were received on the second floor level (after the change to truck transport, goods were received on the first floor on the north side of the building, and the incoming flow of goods continued to be distributed on the first floor, as shown by the arrows → on the "Floor by Floor Axonometric"). Goods were then transported by hydraulic elevator to the various Merchandise Storage areas on the third through ninth floors. Storage for heavier and larger goods was located on the third through ninth floors. Storage for lighter and smaller goods was located in the Merchandise Storage areas, goods were placed on shelves according to catalogue number.

Orders were received via pneumatic tubes from the Administration Building basement, located on the east side of the main building. The tubes ran through the building to the various Storage areas above. Orders were filled according to the method of shipment (mail, express, or freight), and packed in the shipping court and adjacent areas. Until the 1930s, completed orders were shipped by mail from the post office docks on the first floor, Section I; by railroad express and mail from the first floor, Section A; or by freight from the second floor, Section B. The main entrance to the building was through the mid-1900s, the Grocery Building, the Box Factory, and the Administration Building. From the mid-1960s, orders were transferred to the Catalogue Operations Building, located on the west side of Central Park Avenue, for shipment by truck.

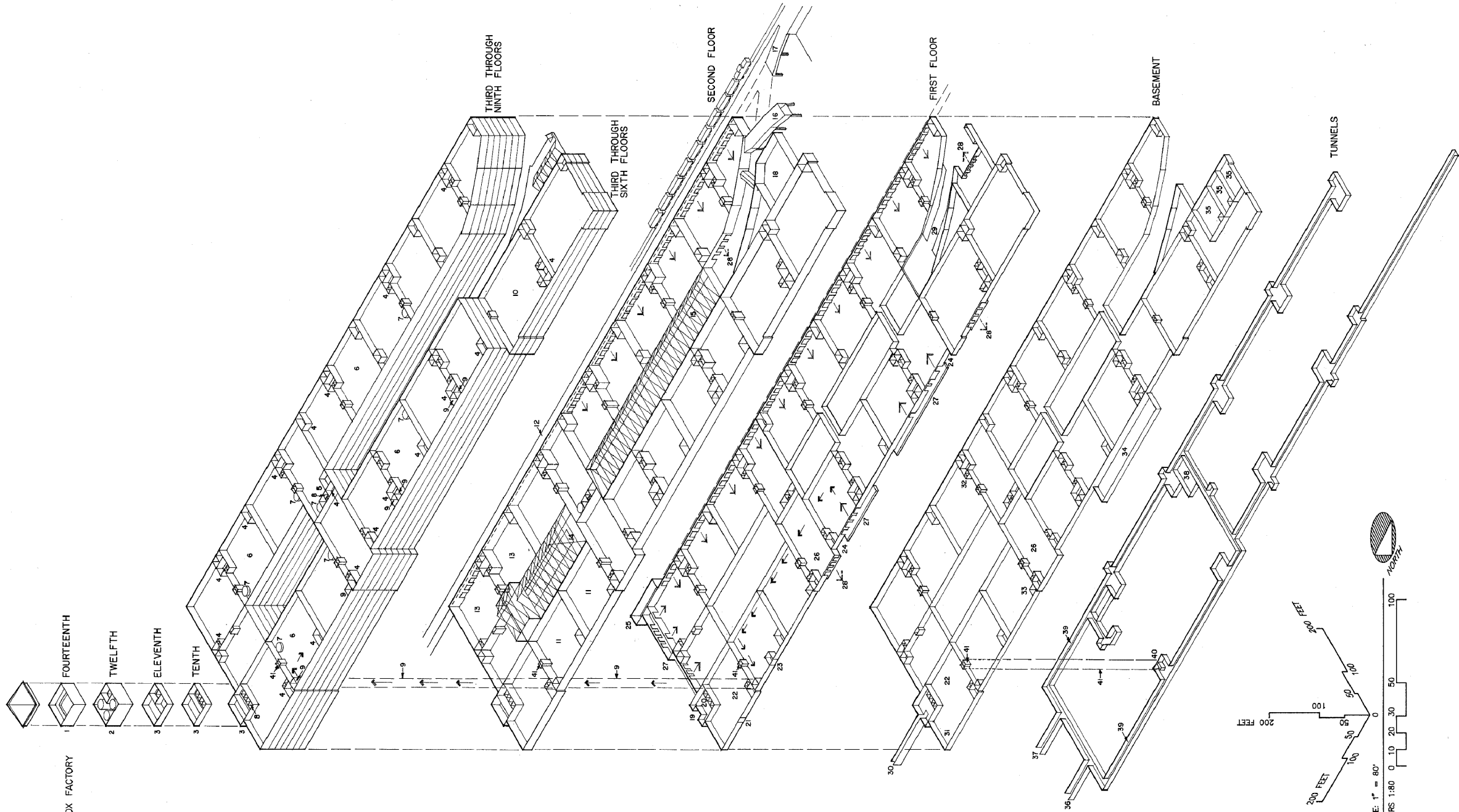
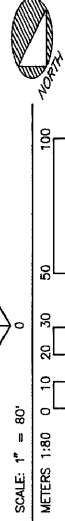
## Building Areas and Elements

- Observation level (Radio Station WLS), (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-76 and IL-1187-A-77)
- Water storage tanks for sprinkler system (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-75)
- Lower offices and laboratories (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-74)
- Employee break room (typical) (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-49)
- Employee break room (typical) (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-49)
- Merchandise storage area (typical), (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-64)
- Spiral chute (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-55 through IL-1187-A-60)
- Electric-powered elevator
- Hydraulic-powered elevator
- Electric-powered elevator
- Railroad receiving platform (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-24)
- Order sorting area (See Sheet No. 10 of 10, HABS No. IL-1187-A)
- Shipping court (See Sheet No. 10 of 10, HABS No. IL-1187-A)
- Truck shipping dock (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-30)
- Truck ramp (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-30)
- Tunnel to Administration Building basement
- Bank vault (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-36 and IL-1187-A-37)
- South tube station (Section C), (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-40)
- Paint vault
- Cold Storage Vaults
- Tunnel to Administration Building subbasement
- Tunnel to Power House
- Pneumatic tube pumping station (below basement)
- Tunnel for steam lines and other utility distribution (below basement)
- Fan shaft
- Air shaft

## LEGEND

- Receiving and Distribution of Goods →
- Shipping of Orders from Truck Docks (1930s to 1960s) ---→

## FLOOR BY FLOOR AXONOMETRIC





# Filling and Shipping of Orders

When the Merchandise Building closed in 1987, the system in use dated from the mid-1960s. System components such as the spiral chutes (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-55 through IL-1187-A-60) and pneumatic tubes were part of the original installation circa 1906 to 1917. Other components such as conveyor belts (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-45 and IL-1187-A-54) in the merchandise storage areas were installed after original construction, and remained in use with some alterations. Although shipping methods changed over the years, the organization of the system for filling orders remained similar to that originally used. In 1987, orders were designated and shipped according to three methods: Single, Mixed, and Control Delivery Service (CDS) orders. Single orders and Mixed orders (more than one item ordered by individual customer) were shipped directly to the customers. CDS orders were shipped to retail and catalogue stores for pickup by customers. Beginning in the mid-1960s, all orders were moved by conveyor from the Merchandise Building to the Catalogue Operations Building, one block west at Arthington Street and Central Park Avenue. At the Catalogue Operations Building, orders were loaded onto trucks for shipment.

## Single Orders

- S.1 Order picker locates item on shelves. (Ticket for order previously received via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-39 through IL-1187-A-41) in the basement.)
- S.2 Item is packaged and placed on conveyor to spiral chute (single order vane).
- S.3 Single item received from spiral chute and travels on conveyor to processing station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-61).
- S.4 Single item received in Section I, first floor, for labeling and weighing, after which it continues via conveyor to Catalogue Operations Building.

(Continued at right)

(Continued from left)

## Mixed Orders

- M.1 Order picker locates items on shelves. (One ticket for each item previously received via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station.) Circa 1987, orders were required to be filled and sent via spiral chute and conveyor to the package station within 20 minutes, so that all order items could be packaged together.
- M.2 Mixed order items placed on conveyor to spiral chute (mixed order vane).
- M.3 Mixed order items received from spiral chute and travel on conveyor to sorting station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-61).
- M.4 Mixed order items received in sorting station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-62); size of order determines whether order is packaged in Section A (normal orders) or Section B (large orders).
- M.5A Mixed orders transferred to one of six "crow's nest" substation conveyors in Section A.
- M.6A At each "crow's nest," personnel sort orders to one of eight package stations (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-67).
- M.7A All mixed order items for each customer are packaged together and placed on conveyor (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-68).
- M.5B Larger mixed orders travel to sorting level (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-63) in Section B.
- M.6B Larger mixed orders are sorted to bins according to designated time of packaging.
- M.7B All larger mixed order items for each customer are packaged together and placed on conveyor (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-69 and IL-1187-A-70).
- M.8 Packaged mixed orders continue to Catalogue Operations Building.

## Control Delivery Service (CDS) Orders

- CDS.1 Order picker locates item or items on shelves. (One ticket for each item previously received via pneumatic tube from either the north or south tube station.)
- CDS.2 Order items placed on conveyor to spiral chute (CDS order vane).
- CDS.3 CDS order items received from spiral chute and travel on conveyor to sorting station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-61).
- CDS.4 CDS order items proceed to sorting station, passing by supervisor who controls distribution to either side of sorting station (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-65).
- CDS.5 CDS orders are sorted by store region to one of eight conveyors to carry merchandise to each sorting substation.
- CDS.6 Substation personnel sort merchandise to bins, with one or more bins per store. (Customer order items were sorted at stores.)
- CDS.7 Merchandise is retrieved from bins and placed in box on conveyor for shipping (HABS Photograph No. IL-1187-A-71).
- CDS.8 CDS orders continue to Catalogue Operations Building.

## Pneumatic Tube System

Customer orders were sent in pneumatic tubes from the Administration Building basement (across Homan Avenue) to the north and south tube stations in the Merchandise Building basement. At the tube stations, incoming order tickets were retrieved and individual tickets were forwarded via outgoing pneumatic tubes to the Merchandise Storage areas on the upper floors.

- A. Incoming pneumatic tubes from Administration Building basement
- B. Outgoing pneumatic tubes to Merchandise Storage areas

## Building Areas and Elements

1. Tower with offices and laboratories
2. Electric-powered elevator
3. Railroad receiving platform
4. Hydraulic-powered elevator
5. Pneumatic tube pumping station (below basement)
6. South tube station (Section C, basement)
7. Merchandise storage area (typical)
8. Quality control conveyor
9. Single order packaging counter (typical)
10. Spiral chute with three vanes
11. Mixed order sorting station (Section E, third floor)
12. Mixed order packaging station (Section A, second floor)
13. Large mixed order packaging station (Section B, second floor)
14. CDS order sorting station (shipping court, third floor)
15. CDS order sorting substations and bins (shipping court, second floor)
16. Tunnel for steam lines and other utility distribution (below basement)
17. Fan
18. Air shaft
19. Air duct system
20. Trash chute (to tunnel system)

CUT-A-WAY AXONOMETRIC

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"  
METERS 1:192

## KEY AXONOMETRIC

The Merchandise Building is shown from the southwest, with the area illustrated in the cut-a-way axonometric highlighted. The Catalogue Operations Building is shown dotted west of the Merchandise Building, where orders were shipped to customers and stores.