

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



IRRADIATED

72

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

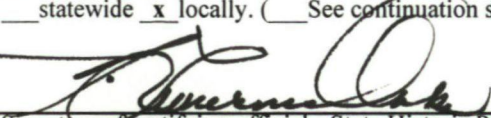
HISTORIC NAME: Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Shell Building; 609 Fannin

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 609 Fannin  
CITY OR TOWN: Houston  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Harris  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
VICINITY: N/A  
CODE: 201 ZIP CODE: 77002

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official - State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

12-5-01  
Date

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

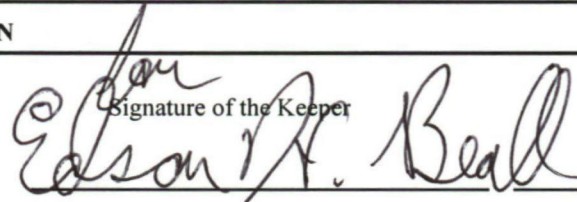
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Edson H. Beal 2/14/02

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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

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

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

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** COMMERCE/TRADE: Business=office building

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** OTHER: 3-part vertical block; LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS STONE/Limestone  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

### Description

The 22-story Houston Post-Dispatch Building (1926) exhibits the typical form, ornamentation, and structural design of early twentieth-century Texas tall buildings. A three-part vertical block with classically-derived ornamentation, the building (like many skyscrapers of the period) is horizontally divided into a base, shaft and capital. The building features an L-plan, with 162,500 square feet of useable floor space, and sits on one quarter block in Houston's downtown business district. Although the classical exterior ornamentation on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor facades was replaced in the 1970s with a modern storefront, the building is in the process of being restored, and retains a good degree of integrity in its location, setting, association, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. With its planned renewal, the building will again contribute to the business and commercial life of downtown Houston.

In 1926 Texas' premier skyscraper architect, Carl Staats of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb designed the Houston Post-Dispatch Building for oilman, entrepreneur, and future governor Ross S. Sterling. Just a block from the center of downtown Houston, the building occupies the northwest quadrant of the block bounded by Texas and Fannin (fronts onto both of these streets), Capitol and San Jacinto. It replaced several small brick and wood-framed stores. A number of small two and three-story business establishments and the eleven-story Keystone Building, which still stands on the northeast corner of the quadrant, complete the block. The Christ Church Cathedral (1893, NR 1979) stands across the street at 1117 Texas Avenue. In 1926, the Post-Dispatch site was considered the heart of downtown, one block from Texas Avenue and Main Street, Houston's retail center at the time. Nearby were the post office, the federal and county court buildings and City Hall. Streetcars and buses ran near the building's entrance.

Similar to the firm's earlier designs in Houston, Fort Worth and Dallas, the 22-story Post-Dispatch Building rises in three parts on a steel skeleton. This three-part division recalls a classical column: the first four floors form the base; fourteen floors comprise the main shaft, and four floors cap off the structure. The public sides of the building open onto Texas and Fannin streets. The rear of the building forms an interior L-shaped courtyard and faces an alley.

#### *Texas and Fannin Street Facades*

The Texas and Fannin Street facades are faced with Bedford (Indiana) limestone and serve as the primary public facades. The other two elevations overlook an alley and a party wall and are clad with a utilitarian brick that matches the limestone in color. Beaux Arts-inspired ornamentation is evident on all levels of the building, although only the Texas and Fannin street facades are elaborately decorated.

From 1926 to 1970, the ground level was dominated by large, regularly placed display windows sheltered by wall-hung striped awnings, four bays of windows on Texas Street and four on Fannin. Building entrances stood at diagonal corners on Fannin and Texas. The original main entrance, on Fannin, was a grand two-story classical portico surmounted by an elaborately carved stone pediment. Its tympanum featured elaborate scrollwork and stylized acroteria at the pediment corners. Cable molding framed the doorway. A one-story revolving glass door with glass transom led into the lobby. The window treatment of the third floor was echoed above the revolving door with a metal ribbon beneath. The secondary entrance on Texas Street was smaller and less elaborate, but still invoked the classical vocabulary.



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The second level presented a narrow band of metal casement windows, arranged in pairs, except at the corners, where a single larger window terminated the row at either end. The arrangement of windows on the second floor level was identical to that on floors five through eighteen, although the second floor windows may have been smaller.

Remodeled in 1970, the first and second floors of the Texas and Fannin Street facades feature five large, 2 story bays with black tinted fixed glass on the second level and inset glass doors on the ground level. The bays are marked by vertical white marble slabs and capped with a horizontal course of the same marble.

Only the first two floors were altered in the 1970s. Floors three and four remain as originally designed by Staats. A two-story colonnade of paired classical pilasters frame the windows of the third and fourth floors. The colonnade stands atop a band of carved stone fretwork that may have served as a cornice for the second floor. The fluted pilasters have simple, Doric-inspired capitals and plinths. The colonnade supports a similarly simple entablature, punctuated by large rosettes above the capitals and a dentated cornice. The colonnade forms ten bays along both the Fannin and Texas Street facades; the eight bays in the middle each have 4-light metal casement windows with transom lights. The bays on all four ends have small windows, and a stone ledge supported by carved stone brackets separates the floors. The two stories are separated by raised metal panels.

Floors five through eighteen form the second part, or shaft, of Staats' three-part skyscraper. In this section, far above the public eye, fenestration is simpler and ornamentation decreases. Slightly projecting horizontal bands of stone carry the horizontal design emphasis that Staats favored. Following the vertical line set up by the pilasters on the floors below, thick stone bands define the ten major bays of these floors on both Fannin and Texas Streets. The middle eight bays are subdivided into two equal minor bays by a slender stone member. As with the third and fourth levels, the end bays are different, each with a single window set in the middle of the bay. All windows are two-light casement windows with transom lights. A carved frieze with round disks and fluted stone between runs below the eighteenth floor and is barely visible from the street. A simple projecting cornice caps the eighteenth floor.

The top four floors of the building form the third and final part of Staats' tripartite design. The colonnade of the second and third floor is repeated and elaborated here, spanning floors nineteen, twenty and twenty-one. Fluted pilasters form the ten bays. The middle eight bays are separated by a single column topped by a two-shouldered urn filled with stylized fruit and flowers, perhaps a pineapple. Raised metal panels separate the windows between each floor. Two pilasters frame the corner bays and carved della robbia fruit baskets adorn the stone panels between the floors. A small frieze tops the pilasters followed by a larger, fluted entablature. The cornice features lions' head gargoyles, placed symmetrically above each pilaster.

The twenty-second floor is inset from the face of the building on the Fannin and Texas sides. It repeats the ten-bay design and is barely visible from the street level. The cornice, which has a large, elaborate shell and cherub frieze, is about the only part of this level visible from the street and is a fitting cap to the building.



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### *Alley Elevation*

The inner east elevation facing the alley is brick-clad, as are all the non-public elevations. Four windows form the fenestration: one at either end of the wall and two in the middle of the wall. Originally, a fire escape ran the length of the wall; now a long series of pipes are tied to the façade. There is no ornamentation on this very utilitarian façade.

### *Elevator Elevation*

The building's elevators were grouped on the south end of the building near the Fannin Street entrance. The five shafts housed Otis elevators. The elevator elevation is primarily blank. Two wood-framed windows sit at one end of each level, but the elevator shaft area is brick. The elevator penthouse is built at the top of this portion of the building. Flat brick, it sits only above the elevators and provides mechanical space. It has a coved setback on the Fannin Street side, but otherwise is flush with the building. It was designed as part of the original building and is offset to be less visible from the street levels. The building's original sign sat atop this mechanical structure. A fire escape descends along the short side of the elevator shaft.

### *Courtyard Elevations*

The interior courtyard of the L-plan building was designed to allow light into all offices of the double-loaded corridors. Like the rest of the nonpublic areas, the courtyard facades are brick. Windows are 2-vertical light, double-hung, wood-framed windows with formed concrete sills. A building-long trash chute sits at one side of the courtyard, providing trash service to every floor as advertised. The courtyard contains the mechanical equipment for the building.

Despite its height (it was the tallest building in Houston when constructed), the building has a deceptive horizontality. The Post-Dispatch building was one of the last of Staat's skyscrapers to emphasize this horizontal look, using narrow molded bands between each tier of windows on the vertical shaft. Cornices separating the three parts also contribute to the horizontality, as do the classical colonnades. Corner bays of the building are treated differently, seeming to anchor the building to the ground. This particular stylistic vocabulary was common among tall office buildings in the late 1920s, although by 1926 Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb were leaving this trend behind (Fox 1983: 11).

### *Interiors*

The interior spaces were fitted out with Hauteville and Travertine marble on the walls and floors. Black marble comprised the base boards and door trim. Marble columns and pilasters supported the highly decorated ceilings on the ground floor. Office floors were terrazzo, and all the wood trim was oak. Offices and office suites were fitted out to order. The L-plan building ensured that each office or suite along the double-loaded corridor would have natural light, and all doors and windows opening to the corridor had opaque glass to let in even more light. Other amenities included a ceiling fan and Venetian blinds in every office and ice water on every floor. The building also had 103 toilets and 592 lavatories. Five Otis elevators stood in the entrance lobby promising quick access to offices on all floors.

In 1970, the Texas and Fannin Street facades were altered on the first and second levels, and the interiors of these floors were "modernized." The first and second floor exteriors were combined, the street fronts were recessed the depth of one bay, and the exterior was clad with precast stone giving a stark two-story face to the lower part of the building. The building continued to serve as an office building through the mid-1990s when it was vacated.



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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Despite the 1970's modernization, the building still retains a remarkable degree of integrity on the exterior. The metal casement windows on levels three through twenty-two are original, as is the classical ornamentation present on all but the first and second floor facades. Fully ninety percent of the historic building material, design and workmanship is intact and readily apparent. The proposed adaptive use will highlight the historic features of the building and draw from them for new elements.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Commerce, Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1926-1951

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1926; 1932

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Carl Staats (architect) of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb; Don Hall (General Contractor)

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-15).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-16 through 9-17).

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

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



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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### Statement of Significance

Designed by Carl Staats of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb for Texas oilman and entrepreneur Ross Sterling, the 1926 Houston Post-Dispatch Building illustrates the mark that new wealth was making on the Houston's skyline during the boom years of the 1920s and is emblematic of Houston's growing importance as a commercial center of the state and Gulf Coast. In the Roaring Twenties, Houston took its place as the headquarters of the southwest's oil and timber industries. Skyscrapers sprang up all over downtown Houston during this period, as oilmen, lumbermen, and bankers sought to put their entrepreneurial stamp on the center of Texas commerce, Houston. The Post-Dispatch building was commissioned by an oilman Ross Sterling to house his new businesses and was later used from 1930 to 1970 as the regional headquarters of Shell Oil. It embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that was the hallmark of Houston's commercial success in the 1920s and is therefore nominated under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Commerce. The building is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a good example of the tension between Classical Revival form language and modern skyscraper design. Despite alterations to the ground level facades and the interior spaces, the building retains a sufficient degree of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to remain recognizable to its period of significance.

### *Overview of Houston's Commercial Development, 1900-1930*

Houston was the state's major entrepot at the dawn of the twentieth century, realizing the vision of rail and port development which had begun in the Bayou City before the Civil War. By 1900 Houston was the hub of more than 10 rail lines, running north, east, south, and west. Houston had always vied with Galveston for shipping business, but the Bayou City's rail network combined with growing port improvements to give the Houston the competitive edge, especially after the Galveston storm of 1900. Cotton was the first important Texas export to pass through Houston, and in the nineteenth century (both before and after the Civil War) it drove the commercial development of the city. The timber industry became important in the 1870s and 1880s, fueling a building boom that transformed Texas from a land of rural hamlets to a state with cities and small towns lining railroad tracks. Timber baron John Henry Kirby established his headquarters in Houston. Anderson Clayton Company, the giant cotton factor and food processing business, moved to Houston in 1916 to take advantage of its commercial opportunities. As Will Clayton recalled later, "Houston was the little end of the funnel that drained all of Texas and the Oklahoma Territory" (McComb 1981: 65-85, quotation, p. 77).

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, however, oil became the leading force in the Houston economy. The first Texas oil boom at Spindletop was in the city's backyard; the 1904 discovery of the Humble Field north of the city was at the city's back door. With the commercial and transportation infrastructure in place in Houston, it was natural that the oil business would gravitate there. The Humble field sent its oil into Houston via one of the state's first pipelines. Houston was soon surrounded by oil fields: Spindletop, the Humble field, Goose Creek (1908), and Blue Ridge (1919). The Texas Company moved its headquarters to Houston in 1908; Gulf Oil came into town in 1916. In addition, the needs of World War I amplified importance of oil and fostered the growth of the Port of Houston. The city added to its commercial influence by fostering professions, businesses, and manufacturing that supported the oil industry and soon became petroleum's business, financial, industrial, and research center. By 1930 there were eight refineries along the Houston ship channel (McComb 1981: 78-85).



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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During the heady 1920s, the city changed physically, as well as economically. Close-in residential developments and outlying suburbs like River Oaks housed the ever-increasing population. The downtown became a modern city with a dense core business district punctuated by modern skyscrapers. Total building permit values grew from more than \$10 million in 1921 to a record \$35,320,000 in 1929. Among the tall buildings that were constructed in Houston during the 1920s were the 16-story Cotton Exchange Building (1924); the Medical Arts Building (16 stories, 1926); and the 37-story Gulf Building (1929, NR 1983). Between 1920 and 1930, Houston grew from about 138,000 inhabitants to almost 300,000 and became the largest city in Texas. The city's skyline, which was so completely changed in the 1920s, remained virtually unaltered for a subsequent 40 years until another downtown boom struck in the 1960s and 1970s (McComb 1981: 85-99).

### *The Houston Post-Dispatch Building*

The Houston Post-Dispatch building, commissioned by Ross Sterling, was one of the largest of the mid-20s downtown buildings. Sterling made his first fortune as a founder of Humble Oil Company. According to the company's biographer, Sterling was "the chief promoter and unquestioned leader of Humble Oil Company" (Larson 1993: 28). Sterling was President of Humble Oil from its inception, and in 1920 he commissioned the construction of the Humble Building in Houston to house the growing business. He chose the architectural firm of Clinton and Russell, known for their Italian Renaissance office buildings in New York. The nine-story Humble Building (NR 1999) is the firm's only known work in Texas. The classical design of the building was chosen to put forward an image of corporate stability and prosperity, and its height at nine stories made it one of the first tall buildings in Houston ("Humble Building" 1998).

Although Sterling devoted much of his time to Humble in the early days of its existence, the oil business was just one of his interests. Sterling became chairman of the Humble board in 1922, but resigned to make what was an unsuccessful run for governor in 1925 (Larson 1993: 85-86). His oil wealth, like that of many of Houston's businessmen, was the foundation for future entrepreneurial endeavors, including the Houston National Bank and *Houston Post-Dispatch*.

Sterling came into the newspaper business by the back door. He loaned money to friends in 1923 to start the *Houston Dispatch* as a competitor to the *Houston Post*. His friends were better newsmen than businessmen and Sterling took over the business side of the paper in November of the same year after advancing more than \$20,000. The first *Dispatch* offices were in the Humble Building, and printing was done off-site. Soon Sterling began construction on a modern printing plant at Polk and Dowling. Aggressively competing with the *Houston Post*, the *Dispatch* continued to lose money, but not as much as the *Post*. In 1924, Sterling purchased the venerable *Post* and put out the first issue of the *Houston Post-Dispatch* on August 1, 1924. Former governor and Sterling political ally William P. Hobby, was named president of the new paper (Kilman n.d.: 94-101).

It was during Houston's mid-1920s building boom that Sterling commissioned Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb to build an office building on the southeast corner of Fannin and Texas Streets to house the paper's business offices as well as other of Sterling's business ventures. In 1924 Sterling met with Carl Staats in Houston to discuss preliminary plans for the building, and it was one of the last in which the renowned skyscraper architect was actively involved. Sterling had a



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continuing relationship with Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb. His daughter Mildred married Wyatt Hedrick in 1925, and the firm was also designing Sterling's Houston National Bank (NR 1983) about the same time (Fox 1983: 11).

Marshall Robert Sanguinet and Carl Staats had been in business since 1903. The two quickly built a statewide architectural practice and became known as "the state's foremost skyscraper architects." Staats was generally the designer in the firm, and Sanguinet was the businessman. They worked throughout Texas, building the tallest structures in Fort Worth, Houston, Midland and San Antonio. In 1911 the firm completed the 22-story Amicable Life Insurance Building in Waco, the tallest building in the Southwest until 1922. The firm also ushered in a new era of architectural practice. Rather than the typical small office, they established branches in cities throughout the state and aggressively marketed their firm. They were among the first in Texas to gather large office teams consisting of architects, engineers, and support people: teams ideally suited for the complicated business of building skyscrapers (Lofgren 1987: 169-171; Fox 1983: 11-13; quotation, p. 11).

Sanguinet and Staats set up their Houston office in 1903, with a commission for the First National Bank building. They were in an ideal situation to take advantage of the city's subsequent growth and made their name with tall buildings. Between 1903 and 1913, they designed eight multi-story buildings in downtown Houston (Fox 1983: 3). Sanguinet and Staats' first tall building (by turn-of-the-century standards) was Houston's eight-story First National Bank Building built in 1905. Steel-framed, it was probably the earliest "skyscraper" in Texas (Lofgren 1987: 170). It was during this period that the firm, particularly Staats, developed a tripartite design approach to skyscrapers. According to Houston-based architectural historian Stephen Fox, Staats resolved "the design of multistory buildings with a tripartite formula consisting of a base level, an intermediate zone encompassing most of the tiers of floors, and an attic zone firmly capping the vertical rise. Complementing this formula was the use of classical detail for architectural decoration." (Fox 1983: 3)

Sanguinet and Staats reorganized their Houston office in 1913, when Alfred C. Finn and Alfred E. Barnes, both rising architects, left the firm. Following their departure, Richard D. Gottlieb was hired as managing partner. Gottlieb had been the Houston manager of William Miller and Sons Company, a construction company based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The firm's name in Houston changed to Sanguinet, Staats and Gottlieb (Fox 1983: 9). In 1921 the parent company in Fort Worth acquired another named partner, Wyatt C. Hedrick. Hedrick, a native of Virginia, was an architect and engineer with his own practice in Fort Worth from 1914 until he joined Sanguinet and Staats in 1921. The headquarters practice was renamed Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick, and the Houston office became Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb. Between 1921 and 1926, the firm designed and built five tall office buildings in Houston and made substantial additions to earlier ones. These included the Federal Reserve Branch (1921-1922), Houston Cotton Exchange (1922-1924), Sam Houston Hotel (1924), and Medical Arts Building (1925-1926), and the Post-Dispatch Building. (Fox 1983: 3-9). Wyatt Hedrick, although based in Fort Worth, managed the Houston office from 1922 to 1930. Hedrick bought out both Sanguinet's and Staats' interests in the firm in 1926 and operated as Hedrick and Gottlieb in Houston (Lofgren 1987: 171; Long 1996a: 540-541; 1996b: 853).

The Post-Dispatch building was meant to house the newspaper's business and advertising offices, as well as other commercial and professional offices. Following Staat's earlier skyscraper designs in Houston, Fort Worth and Dallas, the 22-story building rose in three parts on a steel skeleton. The first four floors form the base; fourteen floors comprise the



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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main shaft, and four floors cap off the structure. Faced with Bedford (Indiana) limestone, the Post-Dispatch building was one of the last of the firm's skyscrapers to emphasize a horizontal look, using narrow molded bands between each tier of windows on the vertical shaft. The firm's earlier tall buildings had followed a three-part formula of exterior design (a base level, an intermediate level that enveloped most of the building, and an attic or penthouse level that capped the building) and had relied on classically based ornamentation. By the mid-1920s, however, Hedrick's design influence was being felt, and several of their Houston buildings of that era reveal a trend toward gothic and modern ornamentation and more vertical emphasis. The Post-Dispatch building, however, reflects more of Staats' classical bent (Fox 1983: 3-11).

The location of the new Post-Dispatch building was in the heart of the downtown, one block from Texas Avenue and Main Street, Houston's retail center at the time. Nearby were the post office, the federal and county court buildings, and City Hall. Streetcars and buses ran near the building entrance. According to the building's promotional brochure, "The location ... was chosen by its builders because of its proximity to the major activities of Houston's commercial life (Houston *Post Dispatch* June 3, 1928).

While construction was underway in the summer of 1925, the Post-Dispatch building was big news. It was the "largest and most expensive structure in the city of Houston," according to the *Post-Dispatch* (August 9, 1925). Don Hall, the general contractor, told the paper that "more than 1000 carloads of material will be used in the construction... and when completed the structure will be an example of permanent, fireproof and the most efficient type of construction" (Houston *Post Dispatch* August 2, 1925). In addition, the building went up at record speed and was ready for occupancy in 11 months (Southeast Center for Urban Research 1980: 216).

The Post-Dispatch Building was completed in early 1926. The Sterling and Baker brokerage firm occupied the ground floor, and R. S. Sterling Investments was on the 22nd floor. Other occupants were a varied lot: a pharmacy, jeweler, doctors and dentists, attorneys, realtors, Texas Portland Cement Company, mortgage companies, oil producers, insurance companies, Sondock National Detective Agency, a tailor and dressmaker, gravel dealer, and the U. S. Weather Bureau (Morrison & Fourmy 1926: 1921-1922). Not long before the merger of the *Post* and *Dispatch*, Sterling purchased a radio broadcasting set-up. Houston's first radio broadcast was from atop the paper's press plant at Polk and Dowling on May 9, 1925, but the Skyline Studios were moved to the top floor of the Post-Dispatch building in 1926. Unlike the newspaper, the radio listener needed equipment, and KPRC distributed crystal sets to readers to increase the listening audience. KPRC is still broadcasting in Houston today (Kilman n.d.: 111-113).

Carl Staats retired in 1924 shortly after completing the design for the Post-Dispatch Building. Sanguinet and Staats sold their interests in the firm to Hedrick in 1926, and the Post-Dispatch was their last skyscraper commission. Although Staats had experimented with other ornament styles, this last building was the essence of the tall buildings that he had built his career around for 25 years, capitalized by it being the tallest building in town. Staats' three-part design on the reinforced concrete and steel frame bore all the elements of his Beaux Arts classicism. The new firm of Hedrick and Gottlieb (the Houston office) established their first office in the Post-Dispatch building. Hedrick and Co. (as the large Fort Worth firm was known) became one of the largest architectural firms in the United States, widely known for tall office buildings. Although Hedrick occasionally used historical styles, he is best known for his body of Moderne work in Fort Worth.



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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### *Houston Post-Dispatch Building Becomes the Shell Building*

Sterling again ran for governor in 1930, this time successfully, and was inaugurated in January 1931. The Great Depression had hit Texas hard by the early 1930s, and even Sterling's own assets were depleted. He had over-extended his resources with the construction of several more office buildings, and his bank had made other bad investments. In 1932 Sterling liquidated his holdings, including the *Post-Dispatch* and the Post-Dispatch building. J. E. Josey purchased the newspaper stock and the Post-Dispatch building. Hobby continued as President, and purchased the paper himself in 1939 (Kilman n.d.: 296-298; Southeast Center for Urban Research 1980: 216).

By 1932 the Post-Dispatch building had become known as the Shell Building. In that year Shell Oil Company occupied floors 17 through 22 (Morrison & Fourmy 1932-33: 1705-1706). Although some offices in the building were vacant in the mid-1930s, the building was generally occupied as it had been before, by attorneys, doctors, and oil-related businesses. Shell offices gradually took over the building, and it continued to be Shell's Texas headquarters until 1970.

Shell Oil Company, unlike many other petrochemical companies headquartered in Houston, did not get its start in the Texas oil fields. In the 1920s it expanded out of the northeast into the Midwest, Texas, and California. Its predecessor in Texas, Roxanna Oil, established a Houston office in 1924 for exploration, land acquisition, and production covering the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast area. Five years later shell built a refinery along the Houston ship channel near Deer Park. By 1930 the refinery was one of eight arrayed along the channel, processing almost 200,000 barrels of oil day. The refinery investment and the Great Depression lured the far-flung company to move its Dallas, St. Louis, and Tulsa offices to Houston, consolidating the mid-west operations in one regional office (Beaton 1957: 369; 697-699; McCombs 1981: 80).

On the eve of World War II Shell's refinery operation was one of the largest on the ship channel and its Texas operation took up even more of the former Post-Dispatch building at 609 Fannin. Shell Oil's Deer Park plant processed the first barrel of toluene in 1941. The company had constructed the plant in four months to produce this key ingredient in high explosives and soon expanded from 2 million gallons to 10 million per year. By 1941 Shell occupied floors 14 through 22 of 609 Fannin.

Wartime production solidified Shell's Houston position. As the region's large petrochemical plants were converted to peacetime uses, Shell and the other chemical companies saw sales increase more than sixfold between 1940 and 1966. By this time Shell was a diversified company, with oil and petrochemical exploration, leasing, refining, distribution, and sales functions. By 1951 Shell operated out of floors 7 through 22 in the Shell Building (Beaton 1957: 369; 697-699; McComb 1981: 128, 129; Morrison & Fourmy 1951: 1267-1068).

The expanding oil and petrochemical industries laid the framework for another expansion and renewal of Houston's business core. By 1963 there were ten new buildings in downtown, including the 41-story Humble Building, the 33-story Tenneco Tower. After almost forty years, Shell Oil had outgrown its home at 609 Fannin. In 1967 the company decided to move its national headquarters to Houston and leased the 51-story One Shell Plaza and later Two Shell Plaza. One



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Shell Plaza, which the company occupied in 1970, was then the tallest building west of the Mississippi River (McComb 1981: 134, 138). Shell Oil never owned the Post-Dispatch Building, but occupied it as a tenant for almost forty years.

Thereafter, the Post-Dispatch building was known as 609 Fannin and had a succession of business and professional tenants until vacated in the mid-1990s. (Exhibit B, photos 21-23)

### *Preservation Plans*

The 2001 adaptive use plans for the Post-Dispatch Building will transform gutted shell into a boutique-style luxury hotel named The Magnolia. (The owner planned to retain the "Post" title, but it was usurped recently by a downtown residential loft conversion.) Plans call for the first and second floor facades on Fannin and Texas streets to be reclaimed to harmonize with the existing historical fabric. These facades will restore the building's original bays, bringing them out to the street again and eliminating the 1970s pre-cast "modernization" (Exhibit C, renderings 1-3). The refurbishment will include the redefinition of the second-level ribbon of windows and installation of large plate glass windows and wall-hung awnings on the first floor. Entrances will reflect the current needs and not replicate the historic. All other exterior features will remain the same from floor three to the rooftop.

While most of the historic interiors have been demolished, the original grand stair connecting floors one and two in the southeast corner of the building is extant and will be retained. The original marble wainscoting exists in the grand staircase and in two-thirds of the elevator lobbies and less than half of the corridors.

The elevator lobbies will be recreated. (There currently are five elevator bays in the lobby; to make the building work as a hotel, there will only be three visible (public) elevators in the elevator lobbies.) The historic marble wainscoting will remain intact or be reinstalled where it currently does not exist on floors four through twenty-two. The reinstallation of the historic marble wainscoting will bring the original feature through the entire tower of the building where it today exists only sporadically throughout due to renovations over the years. The wainscoting will be reinstalled approximately ten feet down each corridor to carry once again the historic element and original character throughout The Magnolia Hotel.

The Magnolia Hotel will have 314 rooms on floors four through twenty-two along a recreated double-loaded corridor plan. The first floor will contain the lobby, public areas, and the restaurant. On the Fannin Street side, the restaurant will be "on display" through the new window system which recalls the historic display windows. Floor two will house the club, library, hotel kitchen and some meeting room space; the third floor will accommodate a 3000 square-foot junior ball-room. An additional 4200 square feet of meeting space will be split between the second and third floors. In the original location of Ross Sterling's twenty-second floor office, the Ross Sterling Suite will be created with wood paneling and finishes similar to the original. A working fireplace, which was eliminated some years ago, will be installed in the original location.

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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### *Summary*

The Houston Post-Dispatch Building is emblematic of Houston's growing importance as a commercial center of the state and Gulf Coast. Commissioned by Texas oilman and entrepreneur Ross Sterling, and designed by the state's premier skyscraper architect Carl Staats, Post-Dispatch Building illustrates the profound impact that commerce and new wealth were having on the city's skyline during the boom years of the 1920s. Because of its historical associations with the growth of Houston's commercial importance in the 1920s, the building is eligible for listing under Criterion A at the local level of significance. Designed by Texas's leading skyscraper architect, Carl Staats, the building was one of the last built by what was then the state's largest architectural and engineering firm. Incorporating classical roots and new technology, the building demonstrates the early twentieth-century tension between the "modern" and the "classical" and is eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. It retains sufficient integrity in all of its aspects to convey its historical importance.

Currently scheduled to be rehabilitated for adaptive use as a boutique style, luxury hotel, the owner of the building has structured the project to utilize the federal rehabilitation tax credit.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 0.3603 acres

**UTM REFERENCES**      Zone Easting    Northing  
                                 15    271660    3294220

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** 0.3603 acre (15,694 Square Feet) tract of land being all of Lot 6 and Lot 7 and part of Lot 8 and Lot 12, Block 70 of SSBB, an unrecorded subdivision located in the John Austin Survey, Abstract Number 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.

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

---

**II. FORM PREPARED BY** (with assistance from Monica Penick and Gregory Smith, THC Historians)

---

**NAME/TITLE:** Scot A. Cameron  
**ORGANIZATION:** Steve Holtze Hotels  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 818 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Denver

**STATE:** CO

**DATE:** June 2001  
**TELEPHONE:** 303-607-0707  
**ZIP CODE:** 80202

**NAME/TITLE:** Sue Winton Moss  
**ORGANIZATION:** for Holtze Houston, LLLP  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 4118 Edwards Mountain Drive  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Austin

**STATE:** TX

**DATE:** July 2001  
**TELEPHONE:** 512-451-3162  
**ZIP CODE:** 78731

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS** See pages FIGURE-19 through FIGURE-21

**MAPS** See page MAP-18

**PHOTOGRAPHS** See page PHOTO-22

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** Holtze Houston, LLLP  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 818 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Denver

**STATE:** CO

**TELEPHONE:** 303-607-0707  
**ZIP CODE:** 80202



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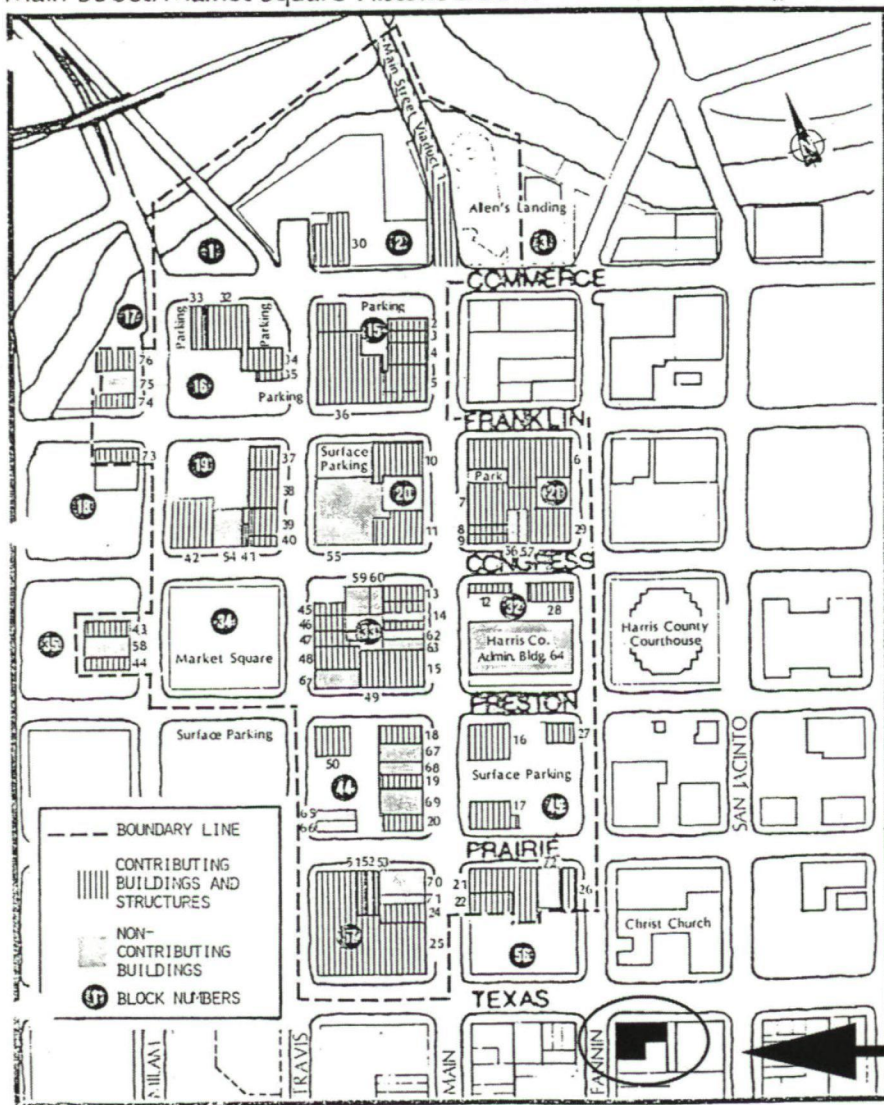
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 18

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

## Location Map

Main Street/Market Square Historic District Houston, Harris County, Texas



**Houston  
Post-Dispatch  
Building**

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 1

Postcard, c.1930)

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room





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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 20

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2

c. 1926

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room



*Winter Night Scene in the Southland*  
**HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING**  
*Center of down-town Commercial activities*

United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 21

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

### Figure 3

Typical Floor Plan, c. 1926

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room

THE twenty-two story building contains 162,500 square feet of rentable floor space; the exterior is of Indiana limestone, corridors have floors of marble and marble wainscoting; all trim throughout the building is of selected oak, and all office floors of terrazzo. There are 70,000 square feet of glass in the building, none of which is ordinary window glass. All exterior windows are of highly polished plate; all corridor windows and doors are of the prism type, opaque, that allow ample light for every office.

Every office has a ceiling fan and Venetian blinds are used on all outside windows.

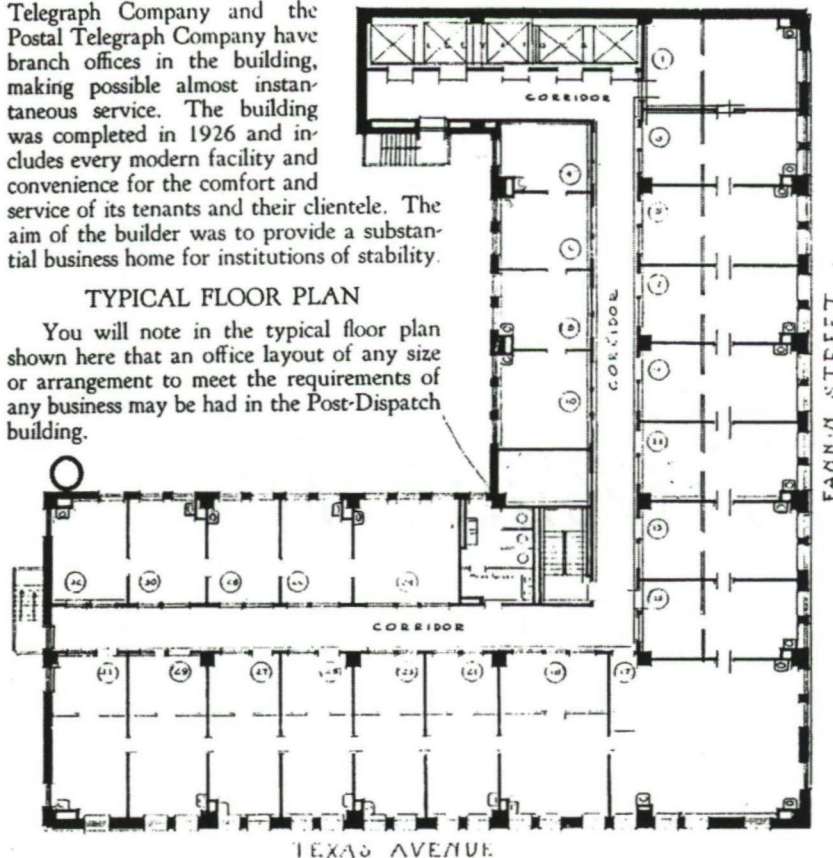
Ice water is available every hour of the day on each floor.

The building is equipped with 592 lavatories and 103 toilets, each the most modern of its type.

Both the Western Union Telegraph Company and the Postal Telegraph Company have branch offices in the building, making possible almost instantaneous service. The building was completed in 1926 and includes every modern facility and convenience for the comfort and service of its tenants and their clientele. The aim of the builder was to provide a substantial business home for institutions of stability.

#### TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

You will note in the typical floor plan shown here that an office layout of any size or arrangement to meet the requirements of any business may be had in the Post-Dispatch building.



TEXAS AVENUE



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 22

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
609 Fannin, Houston, Harris County  
Photographed by Sue Moss  
June 2001  
Negatives on file with Texas Historical Commission

Photograph 1 of 8  
Northeast oblique  
Camera facing Southwest

Photograph 2 of 8  
Northwest oblique (Corner of Texas and Fannin streets, lower elevations)  
Camera facing Southeast

Photograph 3 of 8  
Northwest oblique (Corner of Texas and Fannin streets)  
Camera facing Southeast

Photograph 4 of 8  
North elevation with Christ Cathedral Church in the foreground  
Camera facing South

Photograph 5 of 8  
South elevation  
Camera facing North

Photograph 6 of 8  
Northwest oblique (from above, Corner of Texas and Fannin streets, lower elevations)  
Camera facing Southeast - from above

Photograph 7 of 8  
South elevation, upper stories  
Camera facing North

Photograph 8 of 8  
South elevation, lower floors  
Camera facing North

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

**HISTORIC NAME:** Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** Shell Building; 609 Fannin

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** 609 Fannin  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Houston  
**STATE:** Texas      **CODE:** TX      **COUNTY:** Harris  
**NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A  
**VICINITY:** N/A  
**CODE:** 201      **ZIP CODE:** 77002

**3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official - State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

12-15-01

Date

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

2/14/02



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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

---

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

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

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

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

---

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** COMMERCE/TRADE: Business=office building

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** OTHER: 3-part vertical block; LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS STONE/Limestone  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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### Description

The 22-story Houston Post-Dispatch Building (1926) exhibits the typical form, ornamentation, and structural design of early twentieth-century Texas tall buildings. A three-part vertical block with classically-derived ornamentation, the building (like many skyscrapers of the period) is horizontally divided into a base, shaft and capital. The building features an L-plan, with 162,500 square feet of useable floor space, and sits on one quarter block in Houston's downtown business district. Although the classical exterior ornamentation on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor facades was replaced in the 1970s with a modern storefront, the building is in the process of being restored, and retains a good degree of integrity in its location, setting, association, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. With its planned renewal, the building will again contribute to the business and commercial life of downtown Houston.

---

In 1926 Texas' premier skyscraper architect, Carl Staats of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb designed the Houston Post-Dispatch Building for oilman, entrepreneur, and future governor Ross S. Sterling. Just a block from the center of downtown Houston, the building occupies the northwest quadrant of the block bounded by Texas and Fannin (fronts onto both of these streets), Capitol and San Jacinto. It replaced several small brick and wood-framed stores. A number of small two and three-story business establishments and the eleven-story Keystone Building, which still stands on the northeast corner of the quadrant, complete the block. The Christ Church Cathedral (1893, NR 1979) stands across the street at 1117 Texas Avenue. In 1926, the Post-Dispatch site was considered the heart of downtown, one block from Texas Avenue and Main Street, Houston's retail center at the time. Nearby were the post office, the federal and county court buildings and City Hall. Streetcars and buses ran near the building's entrance.

Similar to the firm's earlier designs in Houston, Fort Worth and Dallas, the 22-story Post-Dispatch Building rises in three parts on a steel skeleton. This three-part division recalls a classical column: the first four floors form the base; fourteen floors comprise the main shaft, and four floors cap off the structure. The public sides of the building open onto Texas and Fannin streets. The rear of the building forms an interior L-shaped courtyard and faces an alley.

#### *Texas and Fannin Street Facades*

The Texas and Fannin Street facades are faced with Bedford (Indiana) limestone and serve as the primary public facades. The other two elevations overlook an alley and a party wall and are clad with a utilitarian brick that matches the limestone in color. Beaux Arts-inspired ornamentation is evident on all levels of the building, although only the Texas and Fannin street facades are elaborately decorated.

From 1926 to 1970, the ground level was dominated by large, regularly placed display windows sheltered by wall-hung striped awnings, four bays of windows on Texas Street and four on Fannin. Building entrances stood at diagonal corners on Fannin and Texas. The original main entrance, on Fannin, was a grand two-story classical portico surmounted by an elaborately carved stone pediment. Its tympanum featured elaborate scrollwork and stylized acroteria at the pediment corners. Cable molding framed the doorway. A one-story revolving glass door with glass transom led into the lobby. The window treatment of the third floor was echoed above the revolving door with a metal ribbon beneath. The secondary entrance on Texas Street was smaller and less elaborate, but still invoked the classical vocabulary.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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The second level presented a narrow band of metal casement windows, arranged in pairs, except at the corners, where a single larger window terminated the row at either end. The arrangement of windows on the second floor level was identical to that on floors five through eighteen, although the second floor windows may have been smaller.

Remodeled in 1970, the first and second floors of the Texas and Fannin Street facades feature five large, 2 story bays with black tinted fixed glass on the second level and inset glass doors on the ground level. The bays are marked by vertical white marble slabs and capped with a horizontal course of the same marble.

Only the first two floors were altered in the 1970s. Floors three and four remain as originally designed by Staats. A two-story colonnade of paired classical pilasters frame the windows of the third and fourth floors. The colonnade stands atop a band of carved stone fretwork that may have served as a cornice for the second floor. The fluted pilasters have simple, Doric-inspired capitals and plinths. The colonnade supports a similarly simple entablature, punctuated by large rosettes above the capitals and a dentated cornice. The colonnade forms ten bays along both the Fannin and Texas Street facades; the eight bays in the middle each have 4-light metal casement windows with transom lights. The bays on all four ends have small windows, and a stone ledge supported by carved stone brackets separates the floors. The two stories are separated by raised metal panels.

Floors five through eighteen form the second part, or shaft, of Staats' three-part skyscraper. In this section, far above the public eye, fenestration is simpler and ornamentation decreases. Slightly projecting horizontal bands of stone carry the horizontal design emphasis that Staats favored. Following the vertical line set up by the pilasters on the floors below, thick stone bands define the ten major bays of these floors on both Fannin and Texas Streets. The middle eight bays are subdivided into two equal minor bays by a slender stone member. As with the third and fourth levels, the end bays are different, each with a single window set in the middle of the bay. All windows are two-light casement windows with transom lights. A carved frieze with round disks and fluted stone between runs below the eighteenth floor and is barely visible from the street. A simple projecting cornice caps the eighteenth floor.

The top four floors of the building form the third and final part of Staats' tripartite design. The colonnade of the second and third floor is repeated and elaborated here, spanning floors nineteen, twenty and twenty-one. Fluted pilasters form the ten bays. The middle eight bays are separated by a single column topped by a two-shouldered urn filled with stylized fruit and flowers, perhaps a pineapple. Raised metal panels separate the windows between each floor. Two pilasters frame the corner bays and carved della robbia fruit baskets adorn the stone panels between the floors. A small frieze tops the pilasters followed by a larger, fluted entablature. The cornice features lions' head gargoyles, placed symmetrically above each pilaster.

The twenty-second floor is inset from the face of the building on the Fannin and Texas sides. It repeats the ten-bay design and is barely visible from the street level. The cornice, which has a large, elaborate shell and cherub frieze, is about the only part of this level visible from the street and is a fitting cap to the building.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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### *Alley Elevation*

The inner east elevation facing the alley is brick-clad, as are all the non-public elevations. Four windows form the fenestration: one at either end of the wall and two in the middle of the wall. Originally, a fire escape ran the length of the wall; now a long series of pipes are tied to the façade. There is no ornamentation on this very utilitarian façade.

### *Elevator Elevation*

The building's elevators were grouped on the south end of the building near the Fannin Street entrance. The five shafts housed Otis elevators. The elevator elevation is primarily blank. Two wood-framed windows sit at one end of each level, but the elevator shaft area is brick. The elevator penthouse is built at the top of this portion of the building. Flat brick, it sits only above the elevators and provides mechanical space. It has a coved setback on the Fannin Street side, but otherwise is flush with the building. It was designed as part of the original building and is offset to be less visible from the street levels. The building's original sign sat atop this mechanical structure. A fire escape descends along the short side of the elevator shaft.

### *Courtyard Elevations*

The interior courtyard of the L-plan building was designed to allow light into all offices of the double-loaded corridors. Like the rest of the nonpublic areas, the courtyard facades are brick. Windows are 2-vertical light, double-hung, wood-framed windows with formed concrete sills. A building-long trash chute sits at one side of the courtyard, providing trash service to every floor as advertised. The courtyard contains the mechanical equipment for the building.

Despite its height (it was the tallest building in Houston when constructed), the building has a deceptive horizontality. The Post-Dispatch building was one of the last of Staat's skyscrapers to emphasize this horizontal look, using narrow molded bands between each tier of windows on the vertical shaft. Cornices separating the three parts also contribute to the horizontality, as do the classical colonnades. Corner bays of the building are treated differently, seeming to anchor the building to the ground. This particular stylistic vocabulary was common among tall office buildings in the late 1920s, although by 1926 Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb were leaving this trend behind (Fox 1983: 11).

### *Interiors*

The interior spaces were fitted out with Hauteville and Travertine marble on the walls and floors. Black marble comprised the base boards and door trim. Marble columns and pilasters supported the highly decorated ceilings on the ground floor. Office floors were terrazzo, and all the wood trim was oak. Offices and office suites were fitted out to order. The L-plan building ensured that each office or suite along the double-loaded corridor would have natural light, and all doors and windows opening to the corridor had opaque glass to let in even more light. Other amenities included a ceiling fan and Venetian blinds in every office and ice water on every floor. The building also had 103 toilets and 592 lavatories. Five Otis elevators stood in the entrance lobby promising quick access to offices on all floors.

In 1970, the Texas and Fannin Street facades were altered on the first and second levels, and the interiors of these floors were "modernized." The first and second floor exteriors were combined, the street fronts were recessed the depth of one bay, and the exterior was clad with precast stone giving a stark two-story face to the lower part of the building. The building continued to serve as an office building through the mid-1990s when it was vacated.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Despite the 1970's modernization, the building still retains a remarkable degree of integrity on the exterior. The metal casement windows on levels three through twenty-two are original, as is the classical ornamentation present on all but the first and second floor facades. Fully ninety percent of the historic building material, design and workmanship is intact and readily apparent. The proposed adaptive use will highlight the historic features of the building and draw from them for new elements.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Commerce, Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1926-1951

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1926; 1932

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Carl Staats (architect) of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb; Don Hall (General Contractor)

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-15).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-16 through 9-17).

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

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



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

### Statement of Significance

Designed by Carl Staats of Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb for Texas oilman and entrepreneur Ross Sterling, the 1926 Houston Post-Dispatch Building illustrates the mark that new wealth was making on the Houston's skyline during the boom years of the 1920s and is emblematic of Houston's growing importance as a commercial center of the state and Gulf Coast. In the Roaring Twenties, Houston took its place as the headquarters of the southwest's oil and timber industries. Skyscrapers sprang up all over downtown Houston during this period, as oilmen, lumbermen, and bankers sought to put their entrepreneurial stamp on the center of Texas commerce, Houston. The Post-Dispatch building was commissioned by an oilman Ross Sterling to house his new businesses and was later used from 1930 to 1970 as the regional headquarters of Shell Oil. It embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that was the hallmark of Houston's commercial success in the 1920s and is therefore nominated under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Commerce. The building is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a good example of the tension between Classical Revival form language and modern skyscraper design. Despite alterations to the ground level facades and the interior spaces, the building retains a sufficient degree of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to remain recognizable to its period of significance.

### *Overview of Houston's Commercial Development, 1900-1930*

Houston was the state's major entrepot at the dawn of the twentieth century, realizing the vision of rail and port development which had begun in the Bayou City before the Civil War. By 1900 Houston was the hub of more than 10 rail lines, running north, east, south, and west. Houston had always vied with Galveston for shipping business, but the Bayou City's rail network combined with growing port improvements to give the Houston the competitive edge, especially after the Galveston storm of 1900. Cotton was the first important Texas export to pass through Houston, and in the nineteenth century (both before and after the Civil War) it drove the commercial development of the city. The timber industry became important in the 1870s and 1880s, fueling a building boom that transformed Texas from a land of rural hamlets to a state with cities and small towns lining railroad tracks. Timber baron John Henry Kirby established his headquarters in Houston. Anderson Clayton Company, the giant cotton factor and food processing business, moved to Houston in 1916 to take advantage of its commercial opportunities. As Will Clayton recalled later, "Houston was the little end of the funnel that drained all of Texas and the Oklahoma Territory" (McComb 1981: 65-85, quotation, p. 77).

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, however, oil became the leading force in the Houston economy. The first Texas oil boom at Spindletop was in the city's backyard; the 1904 discovery of the Humble Field north of the city was at the city's back door. With the commercial and transportation infrastructure in place in Houston, it was natural that the oil business would gravitate there. The Humble field sent its oil into Houston via one of the state's first pipelines. Houston was soon surrounded by oil fields: Spindletop, the Humble field, Goose Creek (1908), and Blue Ridge (1919). The Texas Company moved its headquarters to Houston in 1908; Gulf Oil came into town in 1916. In addition, the needs of World War I amplified importance of oil and fostered the growth of the Port of Houston. The city added to its commercial influence by fostering professions, businesses, and manufacturing that supported the oil industry and soon became petroleum's business, financial, industrial, and research center. By 1930 there were eight refineries along the Houston ship channel (McComb 1981: 78-85).



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

During the heady 1920s, the city changed physically, as well as economically. Close-in residential developments and outlying suburbs like River Oaks housed the ever-increasing population. The downtown became a modern city with a dense core business district punctuated by modern skyscrapers. Total building permit values grew from more than \$10 million in 1921 to a record \$35,320,000 in 1929. Among the tall buildings that were constructed in Houston during the 1920s were the 16-story Cotton Exchange Building (1924); the Medical Arts Building (16 stories, 1926); and the 37-story Gulf Building (1929, NR 1983). Between 1920 and 1930, Houston grew from about 138,000 inhabitants to almost 300,000 and became the largest city in Texas. The city's skyline, which was so completely changed in the 1920s, remained virtually unaltered for a subsequent 40 years until another downtown boom struck in the 1960s and 1970s (McComb 1981: 85-99).

### *The Houston Post-Dispatch Building*

The Houston Post-Dispatch building, commissioned by Ross Sterling, was one of the largest of the mid-20s downtown buildings. Sterling made his first fortune as a founder of Humble Oil Company. According to the company's biographer, Sterling was "the chief promoter and unquestioned leader of Humble Oil Company" (Larson 1993: 28). Sterling was President of Humble Oil from its inception, and in 1920 he commissioned the construction of the Humble Building in Houston to house the growing business. He chose the architectural firm of Clinton and Russell, known for their Italian Renaissance office buildings in New York. The nine-story Humble Building (NR 1999) is the firm's only known work in Texas. The classical design of the building was chosen to put forward an image of corporate stability and prosperity, and its height at nine stories made it one of the first tall buildings in Houston ("Humble Building" 1998).

Although Sterling devoted much of his time to Humble in the early days of its existence, the oil business was just one of his interests. Sterling became chairman of the Humble board in 1922, but resigned to make what was an unsuccessful run for governor in 1925 (Larson 1993: 85-86). His oil wealth, like that of many of Houston's businessmen, was the foundation for future entrepreneurial endeavors, including the Houston National Bank and *Houston Post-Dispatch*.

Sterling came into the newspaper business by the back door. He loaned money to friends in 1923 to start the *Houston Dispatch* as a competitor to the *Houston Post*. His friends were better newsmen than businessmen and Sterling took over the business side of the paper in November of the same year after advancing more than \$20,000. The first *Dispatch* offices were in the Humble Building, and printing was done off-site. Soon Sterling began construction on a modern printing plant at Polk and Dowling. Aggressively competing with the *Houston Post*, the *Dispatch* continued to lose money, but not as much as the *Post*. In 1924, Sterling purchased the venerable *Post* and put out the first issue of the *Houston Post-Dispatch* on August 1, 1924. Former governor and Sterling political ally William P. Hobby, was named president of the new paper (Kilman n.d.: 94-101).

It was during Houston's mid-1920s building boom that Sterling commissioned Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb to build an office building on the southeast corner of Fannin and Texas Streets to house the paper's business offices as well as other of Sterling's business ventures. In 1924 Sterling met with Carl Staats in Houston to discuss preliminary plans for the building, and it was one of the last in which the renowned skyscraper architect was actively involved. Sterling had a



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

continuing relationship with Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb. His daughter Mildred married Wyatt Hedrick in 1925, and the firm was also designing Sterling's Houston National Bank (NR 1983) about the same time (Fox 1983: 11).

Marshall Robert Sanguinet and Carl Staats had been in business since 1903. The two quickly built a statewide architectural practice and became known as "the state's foremost skyscraper architects." Staats was generally the designer in the firm, and Sanguinet was the businessman. They worked throughout Texas, building the tallest structures in Fort Worth, Houston, Midland and San Antonio. In 1911 the firm completed the 22-story Amicable Life Insurance Building in Waco, the tallest building in the Southwest until 1922. The firm also ushered in a new era of architectural practice. Rather than the typical small office, they established branches in cities throughout the state and aggressively marketed their firm. They were among the first in Texas to gather large office teams consisting of architects, engineers, and support people: teams ideally suited for the complicated business of building skyscrapers (Lofgren 1987: 169-171; Fox 1983: 11-13; quotation, p. 11).

Sanguinet and Staats set up their Houston office in 1903, with a commission for the First National Bank building. They were in an ideal situation to take advantage of the city's subsequent growth and made their name with tall buildings. Between 1903 and 1913, they designed eight multi-story buildings in downtown Houston (Fox 1983: 3). Sanguinet and Staats' first tall building (by turn-of-the-century standards) was Houston's eight-story First National Bank Building built in 1905. Steel-framed, it was probably the earliest "skyscraper" in Texas (Lofgren 1987: 170). It was during this period that the firm, particularly Staats, developed a tripartite design approach to skyscrapers. According to Houston-based architectural historian Stephen Fox, Staats resolved "the design of multistory buildings with a tripartite formula consisting of a base level, an intermediate zone encompassing most of the tiers of floors, and an attic zone firmly capping the vertical rise. Complementing this formula was the use of classical detail for architectural decoration." (Fox 1983: 3)

Sanguinet and Staats reorganized their Houston office in 1913, when Alfred C. Finn and Alfred E. Barnes, both rising architects, left the firm. Following their departure, Richard D. Gottlieb was hired as managing partner. Gottlieb had been the Houston manager of William Miller and Sons Company, a construction company based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The firm's name in Houston changed to Sanguinet, Staats and Gottlieb (Fox 1983: 9). In 1921 the parent company in Fort Worth acquired another named partner, Wyatt C. Hedrick. Hedrick, a native of Virginia, was an architect and engineer with his own practice in Fort Worth from 1914 until he joined Sanguinet and Staats in 1921. The headquarters practice was renamed Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick, and the Houston office became Sanguinet, Staats, Hedrick and Gottlieb. Between 1921 and 1926, the firm designed and built five tall office buildings in Houston and made substantial additions to earlier ones. These included the Federal Reserve Branch (1921-1922), Houston Cotton Exchange (1922-1924), Sam Houston Hotel (1924), and Medical Arts Building (1925-1926), and the Post-Dispatch Building. (Fox 1983: 3-9). Wyatt Hedrick, although based in Fort Worth, managed the Houston office from 1922 to 1930. Hedrick bought out both Sanguinet's and Staats' interests in the firm in 1926 and operated as Hedrick and Gottlieb in Houston (Lofgren 1987: 171; Long 1996a: 540-541; 1996b: 853).

The Post-Dispatch building was meant to house the newspaper's business and advertising offices, as well as other commercial and professional offices. Following Staat's earlier skyscraper designs in Houston, Fort Worth and Dallas, the 22-story building rose in three parts on a steel skeleton. The first four floors form the base; fourteen floors comprise the



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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main shaft, and four floors cap off the structure. Faced with Bedford (Indiana) limestone, the Post-Dispatch building was one of the last of the firm's skyscrapers to emphasize a horizontal look, using narrow molded bands between each tier of windows on the vertical shaft. The firm's earlier tall buildings had followed a three-part formula of exterior design (a base level, an intermediate level that enveloped most of the building, and an attic or penthouse level that capped the building) and had relied on classically based ornamentation. By the mid-1920s, however, Hedrick's design influence was being felt, and several of their Houston buildings of that era reveal a trend toward gothic and modern ornamentation and more vertical emphasis. The Post-Dispatch building, however, reflects more of Staats' classical bent (Fox 1983: 3-11).

The location of the new Post-Dispatch building was in the heart of the downtown, one block from Texas Avenue and Main Street, Houston's retail center at the time. Nearby were the post office, the federal and county court buildings, and City Hall. Streetcars and buses ran near the building entrance. According to the building's promotional brochure, "The location ... was chosen by its builders because of its proximity to the major activities of Houston's commercial life (Houston *Post Dispatch* June 3, 1928).

While construction was underway in the summer of 1925, the Post-Dispatch building was big news. It was the "largest and most expensive structure in the city of Houston," according to the *Post-Dispatch* (August 9, 1925). Don Hall, the general contractor, told the paper that "more than 1000 carloads of material will be used in the construction... and when completed the structure will be an example of permanent, fireproof and the most efficient type of construction" (Houston *Post Dispatch* August 2, 1925). In addition, the building went up at record speed and was ready for occupancy in 11 months (Southeast Center for Urban Research 1980: 216).

The Post-Dispatch Building was completed in early 1926. The Sterling and Baker brokerage firm occupied the ground floor, and R. S. Sterling Investments was on the 22nd floor. Other occupants were a varied lot: a pharmacy, jeweler, doctors and dentists, attorneys, realtors, Texas Portland Cement Company, mortgage companies, oil producers, insurance companies, Sondock National Detective Agency, a tailor and dressmaker, gravel dealer, and the U. S. Weather Bureau (Morrison & Fourmy 1926: 1921-1922). Not long before the merger of the *Post* and *Dispatch*, Sterling purchased a radio broadcasting set-up. Houston's first radio broadcast was from atop the paper's press plant at Polk and Dowling on May 9, 1925, but the Skyline Studios were moved to the top floor of the Post-Dispatch building in 1926. Unlike the newspaper, the radio listener needed equipment, and KPRC distributed crystal sets to readers to increase the listening audience. KPRC is still broadcasting in Houston today (Kilman n.d.: 111-113).

Carl Staats retired in 1924 shortly after completing the design for the Post-Dispatch Building. Sanguinet and Staats sold their interests in the firm to Hedrick in 1926, and the Post-Dispatch was their last skyscraper commission. Although Staats had experimented with other ornament styles, this last building was the essence of the tall buildings that he had built his career around for 25 years, capitalized by it being the tallest building in town. Staats' three-part design on the reinforced concrete and steel frame bore all the elements of his Beaux Arts classicism. The new firm of Hedrick and Gottlieb (the Houston office) established their first office in the Post-Dispatch building. Hedrick and Co. (as the large Fort Worth firm was known) became one of the largest architectural firms in the United States, widely known for tall office buildings. Although Hedrick occasionally used historical styles, he is best known for his body of Moderne work in Fort Worth.



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

### *Houston Post-Dispatch Building Becomes the Shell Building*

Sterling again ran for governor in 1930, this time successfully, and was inaugurated in January 1931. The Great Depression had hit Texas hard by the early 1930s, and even Sterling's own assets were depleted. He had over-extended his resources with the construction of several more office buildings, and his bank had made other bad investments. In 1932 Sterling liquidated his holdings, including the *Post-Dispatch* and the Post-Dispatch building. J. E. Josey purchased the newspaper stock and the Post-Dispatch building. Hobby continued as President, and purchased the paper himself in 1939 (Kilman n.d.: 296-298; Southeast Center for Urban Research 1980: 216).

By 1932 the Post-Dispatch building had become known as the Shell Building. In that year Shell Oil Company occupied floors 17 through 22 (Morrison & Fourmy 1932-33: 1705-1706). Although some offices in the building were vacant in the mid-1930s, the building was generally occupied as it had been before, by attorneys, doctors, and oil-related businesses. Shell offices gradually took over the building, and it continued to be Shell's Texas headquarters until 1970.

Shell Oil Company, unlike many other petrochemical companies headquartered in Houston, did not get its start in the Texas oil fields. In the 1920s it expanded out of the northeast into the Midwest, Texas, and California. Its predecessor in Texas, Roxanna Oil, established a Houston office in 1924 for exploration, land acquisition, and production covering the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast area. Five years later shell built a refinery along the Houston ship channel near Deer Park. By 1930 the refinery was one of eight arrayed along the channel, processing almost 200,000 barrels of oil day. The refinery investment and the Great Depression lured the far-flung company to move its Dallas, St. Louis, and Tulsa offices to Houston, consolidating the mid-west operations in one regional office (Beaton 1957: 369; 697-699; McCombs 1981: 80).

On the eve of World War II Shell's refinery operation was one of the largest on the ship channel and its Texas operation took up even more of the former Post-Dispatch building at 609 Fannin. Shell Oil's Deer Park plant processed the first barrel of toluene in 1941. The company had constructed the plant in four months to produce this key ingredient in high explosives and soon expanded from 2 million gallons to 10 million per year. By 1941 Shell occupied floors 14 through 22 of 609 Fannin.

Wartime production solidified Shell's Houston position. As the region's large petrochemical plants were converted to peacetime uses, Shell and the other chemical companies saw sales increase more than sixfold between 1940 and 1966. By this time Shell was a diversified company, with oil and petrochemical exploration, leasing, refining, distribution, and sales functions. By 1951 Shell operated out of floors 7 through 22 in the Shell Building (Beaton 1957: 369; 697-699; McComb 1981: 128, 129; Morrison & Fourmy 1951: 1267-1068).

The expanding oil and petrochemical industries laid the framework for another expansion and renewal of Houston's business core. By 1963 there were ten new buildings in downtown, including the 41-story Humble Building, the 33-story Tenneco Tower. After almost forty years, Shell Oil had outgrown its home at 609 Fannin. In 1967 the company decided to move its national headquarters to Houston and leased the 51-story One Shell Plaza and later Two Shell Plaza. One



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Shell Plaza, which the company occupied in 1970, was then the tallest building west of the Mississippi River (McComb 1981: 134, 138). Shell Oil never owned the Post-Dispatch Building, but occupied it as a tenant for almost forty years.

Thereafter, the Post-Dispatch building was known as 609 Fannin and had a succession of business and professional tenants until vacated in the mid-1990s. (Exhibit B, photos 21-23)

### *Preservation Plans*

The 2001 adaptive use plans for the Post-Dispatch Building will transform gutted shell into a boutique-style luxury hotel named The Magnolia. (The owner planned to retain the "Post" title, but it was usurped recently by a downtown residential loft conversion.) Plans call for the first and second floor facades on Fannin and Texas streets to be reclaimed to harmonize with the existing historical fabric. These facades will restore the building's original bays, bringing them out to the street again and eliminating the 1970s pre-cast "modernization" (Exhibit C, renderings 1-3). The refurbishment will include the redefinition of the second-level ribbon of windows and installation of large plate glass windows and wall-hung awnings on the first floor. Entrances will reflect the current needs and not replicate the historic. All other exterior features will remain the same from floor three to the rooftop.

While most of the historic interiors have been demolished, the original grand stair connecting floors one and two in the southeast corner of the building is extant and will be retained. The original marble wainscoting exists in the grand staircase and in two-thirds of the elevator lobbies and less than half of the corridors.

The elevator lobbies will be recreated. (There currently are five elevator bays in the lobby; to make the building work as a hotel, there will only be three visible (public) elevators in the elevator lobbies.) The historic marble wainscoting will remain intact or be reinstalled where it currently does not exist on floors four through twenty-two. The reinstallation of the historic marble wainscoting will bring the original feature through the entire tower of the building where it today exists only sporadically throughout due to renovations over the years. The wainscoting will be reinstalled approximately ten feet down each corridor to carry once again the historic element and original character throughout The Magnolia Hotel.

The Magnolia Hotel will have 314 rooms on floors four through twenty-two along a recreated double-loaded corridor plan. The first floor will contain the lobby, public areas, and the restaurant. On the Fannin Street side, the restaurant will be "on display" through the new window system which recalls the historic display windows. Floor two will house the club, library, hotel kitchen and some meeting room space; the third floor will accommodate a 3000 square-foot junior ball-room. An additional 4200 square feet of meeting space will be split between the second and third floors. In the original location of Ross Sterling's twenty-second floor office, the Ross Sterling Suite will be created with wood paneling and finishes similar to the original. A working fireplace, which was eliminated some years ago, will be installed in the original location.



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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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### *Summary*

The Houston Post-Dispatch Building is emblematic of Houston's growing importance as a commercial center of the state and Gulf Coast. Commissioned by Texas oilman and entrepreneur Ross Sterling, and designed by the state's premier skyscraper architect Carl Staats, Post-Dispatch Building illustrates the profound impact that commerce and new wealth were having on the city's skyline during the boom years of the 1920s. Because of its historical associations with the growth of Houston's commercial importance in the 1920s, the building is eligible for listing under Criterion A at the local level of significance. Designed by Texas's leading skyscraper architect, Carl Staats, the building was one of the last built by what was then the state's largest architectural and engineering firm. Incorporating classical roots and new technology, the building demonstrates the early twentieth-century tension between the "modern" and the "classical" and is eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. It retains sufficient integrity in all of its aspects to convey its historical importance.

Currently scheduled to be rehabilitated for adaptive use as a boutique style, luxury hotel, the owner of the building has structured the project to utilize the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 0.3603 acres

**UTM REFERENCES**    Zone Easting    Northing  
                          15    271660    3294220

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** 0.3603 acre (15,694 Square Feet) tract of land being all of Lot 6 and Lot 7 and part of Lot 8 and Lot 12, Block 70 of SSBB, an unrecorded subdivision located in the John Austin Survey, Abstract Number 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.

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

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**II. FORM PREPARED BY** (with assistance from Monica Penick and Gregory Smith, THC Historians)

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**NAME/TITLE:** Scot A. Cameron  
**ORGANIZATION:** Steve Holtze Hotels  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 818 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Denver

**STATE:** CO

**DATE:** June 2001  
**TELEPHONE:** 303-607-0707  
**ZIP CODE:** 80202

**NAME/TITLE:** Sue Winton Moss  
**ORGANIZATION:** for Holtze Houston, LLLP  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 4118 Edwards Mountain Drive  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Austin

**STATE:** TX

**DATE:** July 2001  
**TELEPHONE:** 512-451-3162  
**ZIP CODE:** 78731

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS** See pages FIGURE-19 through FIGURE-21

**MAPS** See page MAP-18

**PHOTOGRAPHS** See page PHOTO-22

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** Holtze Houston, LLLP  
**STREET & NUMBER:** 818 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Denver

**STATE:** CO

**TELEPHONE:** 303-607-0707  
**ZIP CODE:** 80202



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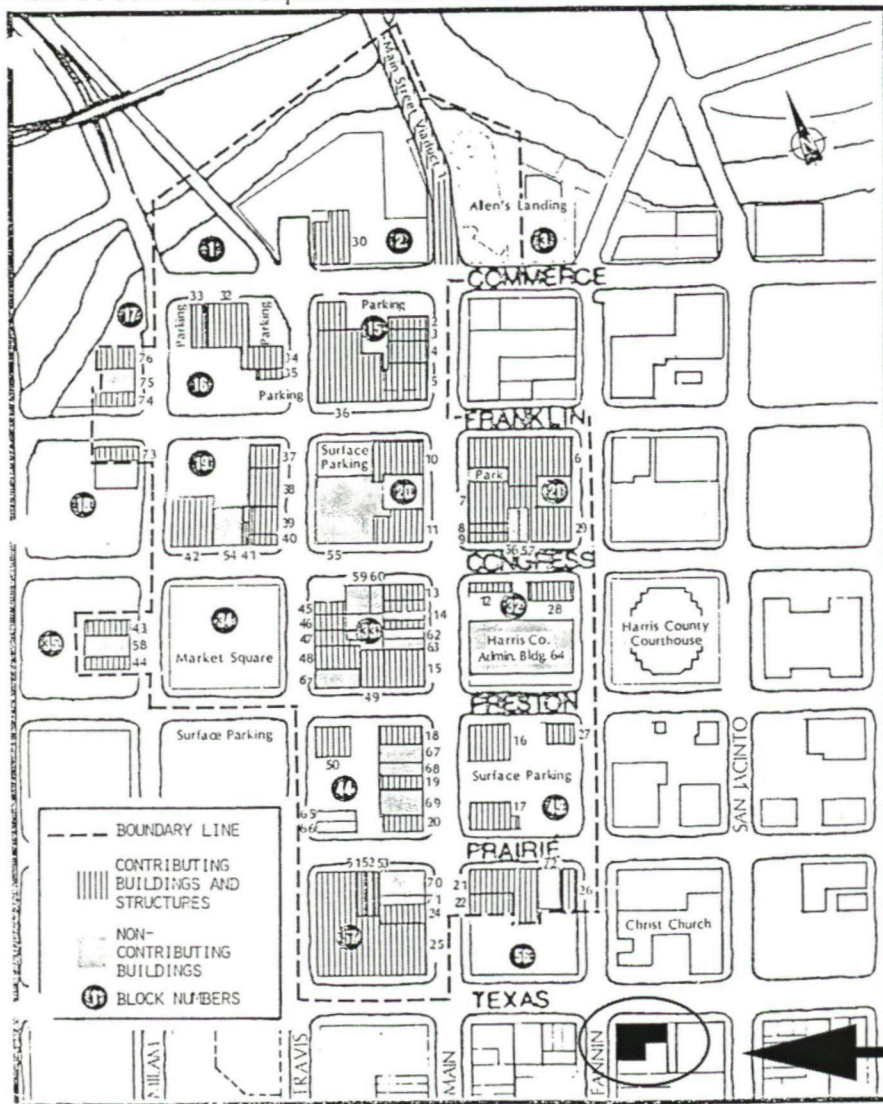
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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

## Location Map

Main Street/Market Square Historic District Houston, Harris County, Texas



**Houston  
Post-Dispatch  
Building**

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 1

Postcard, c.1930)

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room





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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2

c. 1926

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room



*Winter Night Scene in the Southland*  
**HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING**  
*Center of down-town Commercial activities*

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Section FIGURE Page 21

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

## Figure 3

Typical Floor Plan, c. 1926

Source: Houston Public Library, vertical files, Texas Room

THE twenty-two story building contains 162,500 square feet of rentable floor space; the exterior is of Indiana limestone, corridors have floors of marble and marble wainscoting; all trim throughout the building is of selected oak, and all office floors of terrazzo. There are 70,000 square feet of glass in the building, none of which is ordinary window glass. All exterior windows are of highly polished plate; all corridor windows and doors are of the prism type, opaque, that allow ample light for every office.

Every office has a ceiling fan and Venetian blinds are used on all outside windows.

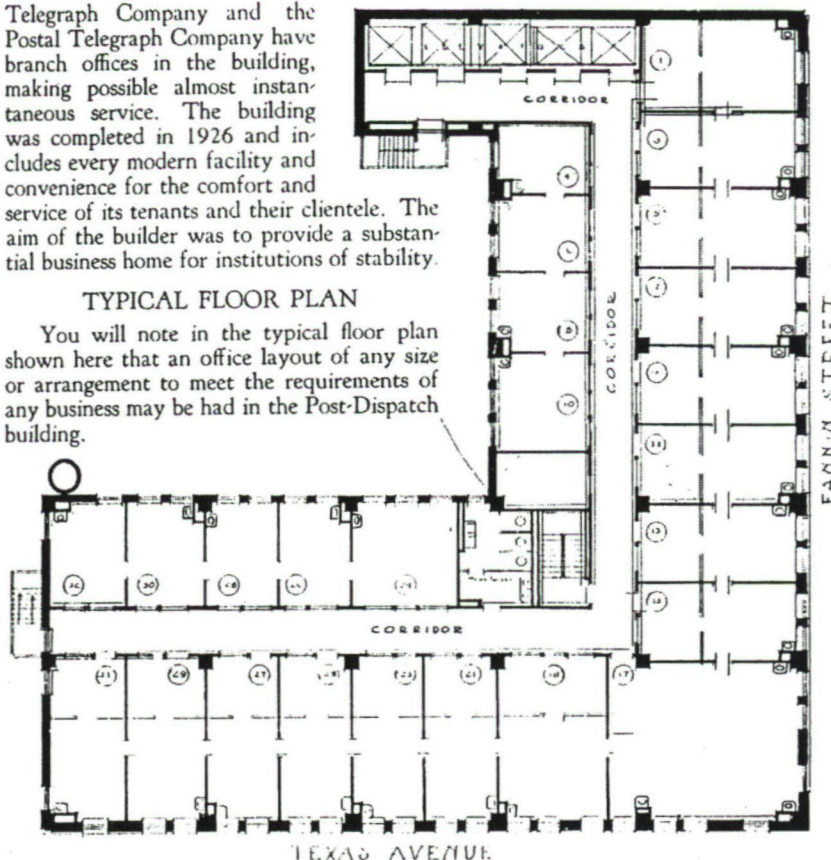
Ice water is available every hour of the day on each floor.

The building is equipped with 592 lavatories and 103 toilets, each the most modern of its type.

Both the Western Union Telegraph Company and the Postal Telegraph Company have branch offices in the building, making possible almost instantaneous service. The building was completed in 1926 and includes every modern facility and convenience for the comfort and service of its tenants and their clientele. The aim of the builder was to provide a substantial business home for institutions of stability.

### TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

You will note in the typical floor plan shown here that an office layout of any size or arrangement to meet the requirements of any business may be had in the Post-Dispatch building.





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 22

Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Houston Post-Dispatch Building  
609 Fannin, Houston, Harris County  
Photographed by Sue Moss  
June 2001  
Negatives on file with Texas Historical Commission

Photograph 1 of 8  
Northeast oblique  
Camera facing Southwest

Photograph 2 of 8  
Northwest oblique (Corner of Texas and Fannin streets, lower elevations)  
Camera facing Southeast

Photograph 3 of 8  
Northwest oblique (Corner of Texas and Fannin streets)  
Camera facing Southeast

Photograph 4 of 8  
North elevation with Christ Cathedral Church in the foreground  
Camera facing South

Photograph 5 of 8  
South elevation  
Camera facing North

Photograph 6 of 8  
Northwest oblique (from above, Corner of Texas and Fannin streets, lower elevations)  
Camera facing Southeast - from above

Photograph 7 of 8  
South elevation, upper stories  
Camera facing North

Photograph 8 of 8  
South elevation, lower floors  
Camera facing North

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Houston Post-Dispatch Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Harris

DATE RECEIVED: 1/07/02      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/29/02  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/14/02      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/22/02  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 02000072

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    2/14/02 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 4 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 5 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 6 of 8





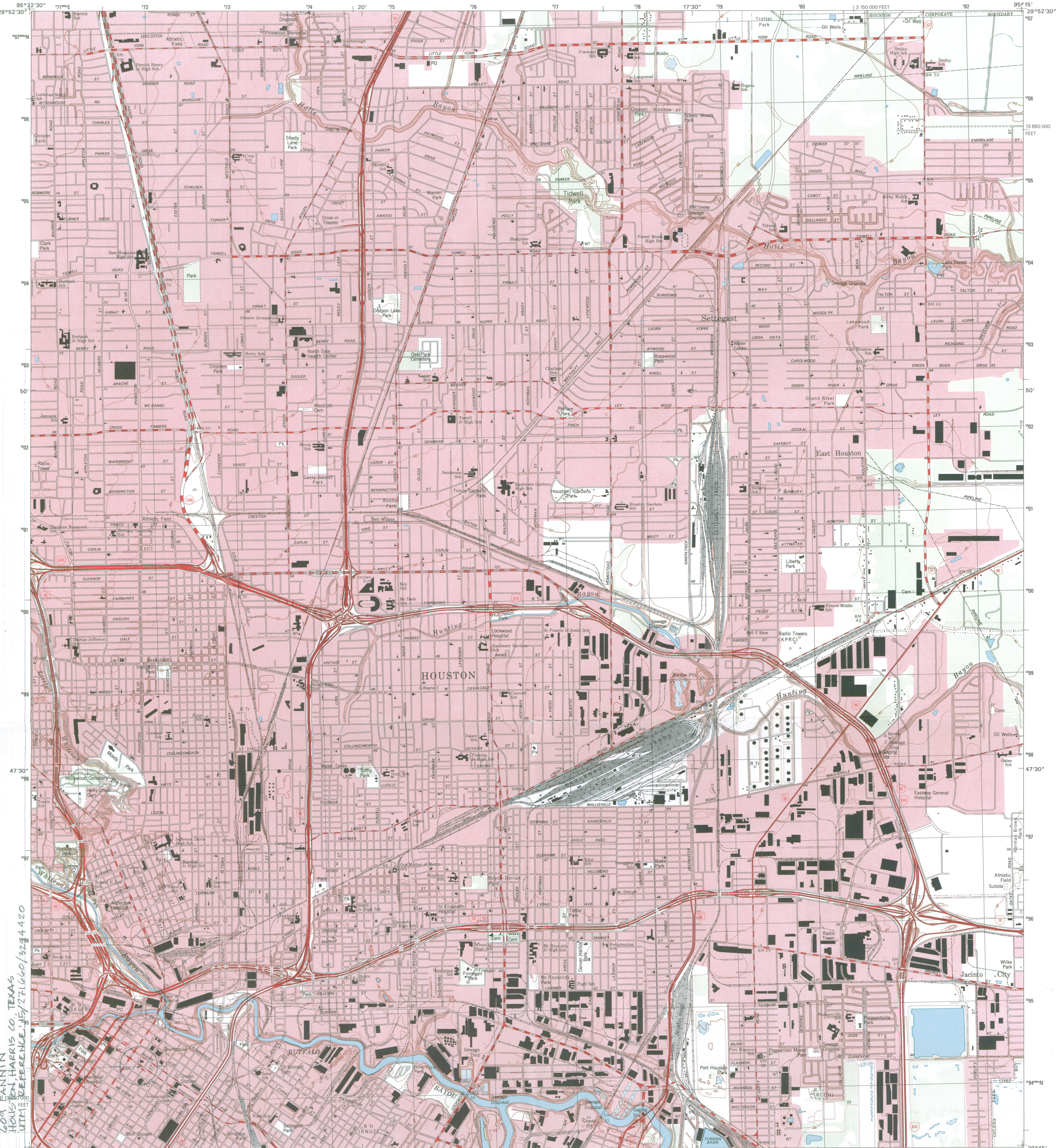
HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 7 of 8





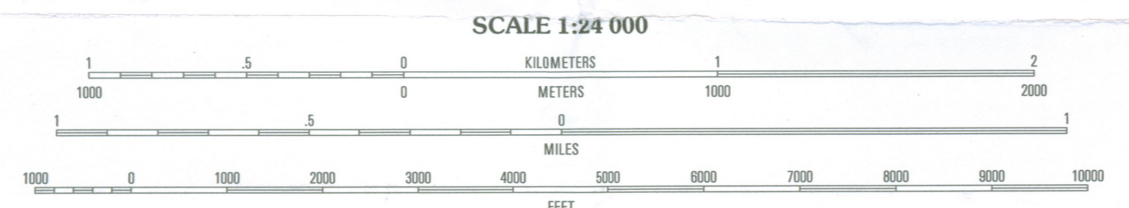
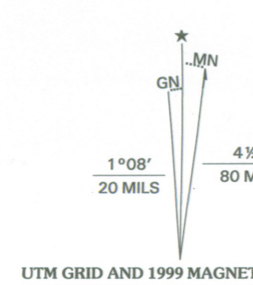
HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 FANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 8 of 8





HOUSTON POST-DISPATCH BUILDING  
609 EANNIN  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO, TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCE 115/271660/3294420

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1976. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1995. Survey control current as of 1976  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15 10 000-foot ticks: Texas Coordinate System of 1983 (south central zone)  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
This quadrangle covers a subsidence area  
Landmark Buildings verified 1976



QUADRANGLE LOCATION  
2995-431

CONTOUR INTERVAL: 5 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway hard surface  
Secondary highway hard surface  
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface  
Unimproved road

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route  
MILLER BLUEPRINT CO.  
P.O. BOX 2065 78768 501 W. 6TH 78701  
AUSTIN, TEXAS PH. #512-478-8793  
1-800-252-3469 FAX #512-474-7099

ADJOINING 7.5 QUADRANGLE NAMES

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

- 1 Aldine
- 2 Humble
- 3 Harmanston
- 4 Houston Heights
- 5 Jacinto City
- 6 Bellaire
- 7 Park Place
- 8 Pasadena

SETTEGAST, TX  
1995  
NIMA 6943 IV SE-SERIES V882

